



Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS



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	International	National	Regional and Local
Events, Opportunities Go to articles	10/28 Day 247 of the Russia invasion 10/28 Iran projects power beyond Mideast 10/28 Germany: 'epochal break' with Russia 10/28 Seoul: NKorea fires 2 ballistic missiles 10/27 Ukraine moves forces closer to Belarus 10/27 Ukraine attacks Russia hold on Kherson 10/27 Kyiv 'sharp deterioration' electric supply 10/27 Kherson Russia loyalists steal crypt bones 10/27 Putin: Russia battling 'pretty strange' elites 10/27 Putin ordered 'dirty bomb' claims to NATO? 10/27 Putin denies nuclear response preparations 10/27 US aims keep sensitive weapons in Ukraine 10/27 Kremlin propaganda shifts: terrorism battle 10/27 WHO: tuberculosis cases rise 10/27 China's largest city Covid lockdown 10/27 Iraq parliament approves new Cabinet 10/27 Iranian forces open fire on protesters 10/27 Killed in Iran memorials galvanize protests 10/27 Canada investigates China police stations 10/27 China establishes overseas police stations 10/27 Spain new citizenship law for Franco exiles 10/27 Bosnia pro-Russia Serb leader won election 10/27 New UK PM breaks tradition; no US first call 10/27 EU approves ban gas-engine cars from 2035	10/28 Credit card debt at pre-pandemic levels 10/27 Study: Covid symptoms can rebound 10/27 Police, firefighters high Covid death rates 10/27 Women most at-risk long Covid symptoms 10/27 Hospitals near capacity for RSV infections 10/27 Concerns: Miami Beach condo evacuated 10/27 US dismisses Russia as an 'acute threat' 10/27 Pentagon outlines sweeping new strategy 10/27 Pandemic, aftershocks reshape downtown 10/27 Census: why 100M not working in October 10/27 Since 2021: 1.8M more illegals living in US 10/27 Nicaragua: US sanctions in more migrants 10/27 Jobless claims inch higher still remains low 10/27 Hawaii officials: Mauna Loa sending signals 10/27 NYPD: extremists may pose election threat 10/27 Local Calif. election officials fear for safety 10/27 NYC Fire Dept. 1st female fire commissioner 10/27 China ramps up election influence 10/27 Mortgage rise: 30yr fixed-rate to 7.08% 10/27 Scary Halloween: candy prices rise 13.1%	10/27 Rep. Jayapal draws ire over Ukraine letter 10/27 Health officials urge: Covid-19 vax, flu shots 10/27 Deputy Secretary State visits Seattle 10/27 Seattle mayor 'One Seattle Graffiti Plan' 10/27 Activists: parking enforcement betrayal 10/27 Seattle's real estate outlook slips in ranking 10/27 Court: bikini baristas ban unconstitutional 10/27 Sound Transit takes over downtown tunnel 10/27 AG bars 'Center for Covid Control' from WA 10/27 'Burn boss' arrest stokes land use tensions 10/27 Yakima, Spokane Co's lose \$2M federal aid
Cyber, Tech Awareness Go to articles	10/28 CraneFly has new intel-gathering tool 10/28 Cloud, hybrid working security concerns 10/28 Slovak, Polish parliaments in cyberattacks 10/27 DeFi platform hacked: \$14.5M stolen 10/27 Fodcha DDoS botnet injects ransoms 10/27 Drinik malware targets 18 India banks 10/27 Cyberattack hits German energy supplier	10/28 Tech boom ends 10/28 DHS baseline cybersecurity goals 10/28 Customer service number? Could be scam 10/27 Elon Musk acquires Twitter 10/27 Threat actors target Instagram users 10/27 Raspberry Robin cyber-worm operation 10/27 Twilio discloses another hack from June 10/27 Prepare now for critical flaw in OpenSSL? 10/27 Be mindful of Russia meddling in midterms 10/26 Retail stores more vulnerable to cybercrime	
Terrorism, Extremism Go to articles	10/28 Jihadists increase content in Spanish 10/27 Toronto 18 terrorist leader gets parole 10/27 Italy white supremacist terror arrest 10/27 IS claims attack on Taliban vehicle	10/27 Somalia asks US for more drone strikes 10/27 US non-emergency staff to leave Nigeria	10/27 Fed agents improperly gathered intel
Suspicious, Unusual Go to articles	10/27 Close to 'irreversible' climate breakdown? 10/26 New climate reality coming into view	10/27 Secret prisoner swap splintered US, China 10/27 Report: plastics recycling dead-end street	10/27 Seattle fallout shelter: only one built in US
Crime, Criminals Go to articles	10/27 Perpetrator Tadamon massacre still in Syria 10/27 Climate activist glues head to painting 10/26 Germany: rising levels of antisemitism	10/27 Murder probe: 8 found dead in house fire 10/27 Trafficked guns used in school shooting? 10/27 Overt antisemitism returns; violence rises 10/27 Dragged officer into Jan 6 mob: gets 90mo.	10/27 Store managers plea for better protection 10/27 Parents, kids steal \$15K makeup products 10/27 DUI enforcement over Halloween weekend 10/27 USPS data: change-of-address fraud on rise 10/27 Half WA unsolved murder cases in King Co.

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Events, Opportunities

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	10/28 Germany: 'epochal break' with Russia
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/no-room-old-dreams-german-president-says-russia-ties-2022-10-28/

GIST	<p>BERLIN, Oct 28 (Reuters) - Russia's invasion of Ukraine has caused an "epochal break" in Germany's ties with Moscow and the war has shattered former Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev's dream of a "common European home", President Frank-Walter Steinmeier said on Friday.</p> <p>Steinmeier, who hails from a wing of Germany's Social Democrats that long argued for closer economic ties to Moscow, said Russia's invasion of Ukraine had brought a change in era.</p> <p>"When we look at the Russia of today, there is no room for old dreams," Steinmeier said in the prepared text of a national address. "Our countries are standing against each other today."</p> <p>"It has also plunged us in Germany into another time, into an insecurity we thought we had overcome: a time marked by war, violence and flight, by concerns about the expansion of war into a wildfire in Europe," he said.</p> <p>Steinmeier made a surprise visit to Kyiv on Tuesday, when he promised further support to Ukraine, especially in the area of air defence. The visit was his first since Russia invaded Ukraine.</p> <p>Steinmeier had originally planned to visit Ukraine in April but Kyiv refused to welcome him then amid disquiet over his past support for a Western rapprochement with Russia. Kyiv and Berlin later patched up their disagreement.</p> <p>Steinmeier, whose role as head of state is largely ceremonial, said in his speech that Russian President Vladimir Putin was personally responsible for the turmoil in Europe, and he decried his "imperial obsession". Putin in turn has accused the West of inciting the war.</p> <p>"Harder years, rough years are coming," he said.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/27 New UK PM breaks tradition; no US first call
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/rishi-sunak-zelenskyy/2022/10/27/id/1093797/
GIST	<p>The new British prime minister typically makes the first official phone call to world leaders to the president of the United States. But that's not what happened this week when Rishi Sunak picked up the receiver and dialed Ukraine.</p> <p>"Following old tradition, the first phone call of the new UK prime minister went to the leader of the free world. But this time it was to Zelensky in Kyiv, not DC!" Russian chess Grandmaster and noted dissident Garry Kasparov tweeted upon hearing the news.</p> <p>Kasparov is a vocal critic of Vladimir Putin's war on Ukraine and a supporter of Ukraine and its President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. He has lived in New York City since 2015.</p> <p>Following the call, Zelenskyy said, "I believe that the partnership between our countries and the already traditional British leadership in the defense of democracy and freedom will be further strengthened. I invited the prime minister to visit Ukraine," Yahoo News reported.</p> <p>He added, "I am grateful to everyone who helps us fight for freedom."</p> <p>Sunak assured Zelenskyy that "the United Kingdom's support for Ukraine would be as strong as ever under his premiership" and that he could "count on his government to stand in continued solidarity," a Downing Street spokeswoman said.</p> <p>"The prime minister also noted the importance of the International Atomic Energy Agency's work in Ukraine to ensure nuclear safety and provide transparency around any disinformation," she added.</p> <p>"Both leaders agreed on the need to continue to place pressure on Putin's barbaric regime through continued economic sanctions. President Zelenskyy congratulated the prime minister on his</p>

	appointment and wished him a happy Diwali. The prime minister thanked him and said he hoped they would see each other in person soon."
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/27 Census: why 100M not working in October
SOURCE	https://za.investing.com/news/hereswhy-100-million-americans-werent-working-this-month-2640414
GIST	<p>(Bloomberg) -- About 100 million Americans weren't working in early October, according the Census Bureau, and some of the reasons may come as a surprise.</p> <p>Almost half of the respondents are retired, which is to be expected given the size of the baby boomer generation and the fact that many exited the labor market early during the pandemic. Another 12% were either sick from an illness unrelated to Covid or disabled.</p> <p>But the coronavirus continues to play an outsized role in keeping workers out of the labor force. The poll implies that 5.6 million people aren't working because of Covid-19, whether they are ill themselves, caring for someone who's sick, or they're concerned about getting or spreading the coronavirus. Others also cite losing their jobs because of the pandemic.</p> <p>The labor market has remained tight this year even as inflation hit a four-decade high and parts of the economy cooled. Job openings, while off their peaks, are still historically high. Businesses large and small have complained about labor shortages and difficulties to retain staff.</p> <p>The Census poll, conducted from Oct. 5 to Oct. 17, offers a glimpse into why many stayed on the sidelines.</p> <p>More than 6 million didn't have a job because they were caring for a child or elderly person, and another 6.8 million didn't want to be employed, the survey shows. The lack of transportation was keeping about 1.2 million workers on the sidelines.</p> <p>The equivalent of 32 million people who aren't working are relying on savings to cover their needs, including withdrawals from retirement accounts or money from selling assets. Another 26 million are using credit cards or loans and 12 million have been borrowing from family for friends to help meet their expenses, the poll shows.</p> <p>In addition, more than 20 million are relying on government transfers of some type such as unemployment insurance payments, food stamps or government rental assistance.</p> <p>The Census allowed for multiple categories to be marked.</p> <p>The agency started the household pulse survey after Covid-19 hit the US, to provide real-time data on how the pandemic is affected families.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/27 Activists: parking enforcement betrayal
SOURCE	https://www.kuow.org/stories/activists-call-mayor-s-plan-to-return-parking-enforcement-to-police-a-huge-betrayal
GIST	<p>When racial justice protestors called for cuts to the Seattle Police Department in the summer of 2020, the City Council responded by moving parking enforcement officers to the transportation department. The shift began in 2021 and did not go smoothly.</p> <p>The general idea was to improve public safety, on two fronts. This change would reduce interactions between Seattle residents and law enforcement, which advocates point out can lead to conflict and inequitable treatment.</p>

Another goal was to streamline communication between the officers who issue parking tickets and the transportation division tasked with fixing hazardous parking areas, such as streets that need a three-minute drop-off zone or clearer signage to mark where it's legal to park.

Now, less than a year later, Mayor Bruce Harrell wants to undo that move and put parking enforcement back under the police department. He says doing so will save the city millions of dollars in overhead and will improve parking enforcement officers' morale. However, city council staff said in a recent budget meeting that the cost is the same regardless of which department handles parking enforcement.

Racial justice activists and advocates for pedestrian and bike safety have banded together to fight the mayor's proposal.

"It's a huge betrayal," said Trae Thompson-Wiley, a community organizer with Creative Justice who spent the summer of 2020 organizing weekly protests. "Something that impacts us every day doesn't mean as much to the mayor's office."

"We wanted a civilian-centered approach to this," Thompson-Wiley said. "With parking enforcement being with the Seattle Police Department, we know that the Black and Brown communities, especially, and Indigenous communities are more harmed by policing."

Thompson-Wiley and other activists viewed the parking enforcement move as part of a broader, long-term effort to scale back policing, including in traffic enforcement and response to mental health crises.

Parking enforcement in Seattle was already done by non-sworn, unarmed civilians, but activists say it still should make a difference to move them out of the police department.

"It's not necessary for [parking enforcement] to be done by people with an enforcement or punishment mindset," said Clara Cantor, with Seattle Neighborhood Greenways and Whose Streets Our Streets, an all-BIPOC group dedicated to re-envisioning safety in streets and public spaces.

It "could be done significantly better by someone who doesn't have that mindset, who's thinking more about public safety or curb space management," Cantor said.

Cantor ticked off a list of safety hazards that illegal parking can cause: Cars blocking curb ramps force people in wheelchairs to use detours outside of crosswalks. Delivery trucks and ride-share vehicles parked in bike lanes force bike commuters to merge with traffic. When cars park too close to intersections, people who want to cross the street have to edge off the curb to see if it's safe.

The situations are "very, very common," Cantor said. There's even [a whole Twitter account](#) dedicated to photos of cars blocking bike lanes in Seattle, with several new posts every day.

Writing parking tickets won't solve these problems, Cantor said.

"The way to solve that is to make an actual change to the street," she said.

But the changes activists envisioned when they asked for parking enforcement to be moved out of the police department were never made.

"The bulk of things associated with our unit are still housed within SPD," said Chrisanne Sapp, president of the Parking Enforcement Officers Guild. "We still work out of SPD facilities. We still drive cars and scooters that say Seattle Police Department. Our uniforms still say police."

The mayor's office confirmed there was no difference in enforcement priorities between this year and previous years, and there is currently no tracking of where frequent parking violations occur, which could help identify possible fixes at the street level.

The parking officers never wanted out of SPD, and Harrell's office appears poised to honor that position.

"First and foremost, this move responds to the wishes of our employees and their labor representatives, who have expressed their preference for being housed in the Seattle Police Department," Jamie Housen, a spokesperson for the mayor, wrote in an email.

"It's no secret that we did not believe that SDOT [the Department of Transportation] was the right place for us," Chrisanne Sapp, the parking enforcement officer, said. "We are an enforcement arm. We are non-sworn civilian employees, but we do go out and issue citations based on the Seattle Municipal Code."

It's a question of identity, she said.

"We as a group view ourselves as working in support of and in conjunction with the officers in the Seattle Police Department," Sapp said. "And we would like to continue that moving forward."

She also said that, when parking enforcement officers are housed within the police department, they're able to access information about vehicle owners' history, including aggression toward law enforcement, and whether vehicle tabs were paid but not yet affixed to the vehicle. She said that information makes it easier and safer for parking enforcement officers to do their job.

In a recent budget meeting, Seattle City Councilmember Teresa Mosqueda asked if there was a way to resolve some of parking enforcement officers' concerns — such as granting them access to information about stolen vehicles and hostile individuals — without moving them back to the police department.

She also questioned why the transfer was so bumpy and incomplete in the first place.

"This is not directed at the current administration, because I think you've all been trying to identify where there's been challenges with implementation since you've arrived, but why were these individuals never offered a uniform or badge that did not say SPD?" Mosqueda asked. "I think that's problematic, if our entire effort was to try to reduce what people perceive to be additional police presence due to parking enforcement officers being in neighborhoods."

Changing the core mission of parking enforcement from a punishment model to a focus on safety, and a corresponding shift in parking enforcement officers' identities, is exactly what proponents of the change had in mind, Trae Thompson-Wiley said.

"The biggest thing they have to do is making sure that everything is transferred over — that it's a full shift," she said.

A year was too short a time for this experiment, Clara Cantor said.

"Culture shift takes a bit longer than that," she said.

The City Council plans to vote on the final budget Nov. 21 and 22.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 Deputy Secretary State visits Seattle
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/politics/deputy-secretary-of-state-visits-seattle/281-502ab175-f739-4123-bcc1-4e1456393658
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman spent time in Seattle this week talking about technology and how it related to foreign policy.</p> <p>Sherman was at University of Washington when it was announced that next year Seattle will be the host city for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum. It is an opportunity to welcome leaders from around the world.</p>

	<p>Seattle will be the prime venue for a summit that promotes sustainable economic growth, trade, and investment.</p> <p>"I think this will be a tremendous partnership with the City of Seattle on so many levels," said Sherman. "It's going to be a really phenomenal event where great minds will come together representing everybody's interests and try to address these challenges of the future."</p> <p>During Sherman's two-day visit, she spoke at Allen Library at University of Washington, and met with students who are studying cyberspace and foreign policy.</p> <p>"It's terrific, but technology also can be used for things that are not good, like disinformation, like surveillance, like controlling free expression," said Sherman. "We've seen the protests in Iran after Mahsa Amini was brutally killed by the so-called morality police."</p> <p>Sherman cites the thousands gathering to protest as a recent example.</p> <p>"They just want to express who they are and have a more open society in Iran. To do that they need to communicate, and the regime has shut down the internet, shut down the ability for people to communicate. So, this is what we were talking about with students today. This is critical to national security and foreign policy. These are domains of the future we all have to understand," said Sherman.</p> <p>During Sherman's trip, she also visited T-Mobile to discuss U.S. technology policy and expanding opportunities.</p> <p>"We talked about what that future might look like," said Sherman. "There's a 6G universe out there that nobody understands yet. And we want to get some idea of what one company is thinking about that, and we certainly will be talking with other companies as well."</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	10/27 NYPD: extremists may pose election threat
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/us/new-york-police-say-extremists-could-pose-threat-election-nears-media-reports-2022-10-27/
GIST	<p>NEW YORK, Oct 27 (Reuters) - The New York Police Department has called for "elevated vigilance" ahead of the U.S. midterm elections, warning that extremists could target political events and polling sites, the agency said in an internal bulletin obtained by Reuters.</p> <p>Poll workers, people at rallies and political candidates face heightened risk of attack in the run-up to the Nov. 8 elections, according to an alert issued by the NYPD's Intelligence Bureau on Wednesday.</p> <p>The bulletin stressed it was drawing attention to the risk of attacks or threats even though there were no credible threats known by police at this time.</p> <p>Rising crime rates have become a top election issue for voters in New York and across the country. Public safety took center stage this week at a debate between New York Governor Kathy Hochul, a Democrat, and U.S. Representative Lee Zeldin, her Republican challenger.</p> <p>In July, Zeldin was giving a campaign speech when a man climbed on stage and tried to stab him. Zeldin was not harmed in the incident and the attacker was arrested.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	10/27 Spain new citizenship law for Franco exiles
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/27/spains-new-citizenship-law-for-franco-exiles-offers-hope-in-latin-america

Once Spaniards looked across *el charco* (the pond) for refuge. Now traffic is expected to go the other way after [Spain](#) passed a law granting citizenship to the grandchildren of people exiled under the Franco dictatorship.

Lawyers and consulates in central and South America say they have been inundated with inquiries after the passing of the democratic memory law, which seeks “to settle Spanish democracy’s debt to its past”. It is estimated that as many as 700,000 people could be eligible for citizenship under the law, [which passed the upper house of parliament on 5 October](#) and came into effect on 21 October.

It goes much further than similar legislation in 2007, which offered citizenship to some offspring of Spanish exiles, with about 70,000 Latin Americans becoming Spanish citizens.

According to Mónica Fernández Álvarez, a Madrid-based Argentinian lawyer, the recently passed legislation entitles any descendant of Spanish immigrants born before 1985 – the year Spain changed its nationality law – to citizenship. Previously, children of exiles who had changed or renounced their Spanish citizenship were not entitled to claim it back.

The new law, labelled “the grandchild law”, is based on the principle of *ius sanguinis*, or bloodlines, said Fernández Álvarez, rather than place of birth.

The law also covers the descendants of women who lost their citizenship by default through marrying non-Spaniards. According to Fernández Álvarez, even Argentinians living illegally in Spain can apply. The process is expected to take no more than a year, compared with three years for citizenship applications based on residence.

Applicants will have to show proof of parentage and must also demonstrate that their ancestors were fleeing political persecution.

The law offers a portmanteau definition of persecution, with victims of Francoism defined as “anyone who suffered physical, moral or psychological damage, economic damage or the loss of fundamental rights”.

The citizenship offer closes in October 2024.

Between the end of the civil war in 1939 and the approval of the democratic constitution in 1978, an estimated 2 million Spaniards fled the regime.

The [exodus began](#) when nearly 500,000 people escaped across the border to France in the dying days of the civil war. A column hundreds of miles long of terrified civilians, mainly women, children and older people, walked across the Pyrenees in freezing weather and under constant bombardment, abandoning their few possessions en route.

Once in France they faced a hostile reception and thousands were sent to concentration camps, where many died.

Between 1939 and 1942 an estimated 25,000 Spaniards, among them many artists and intellectuals, fled to Mexico, where they were welcomed.

The historian Henry Kamen, in *The Disinherited*, his history of Spanish exile, wrote: “The emigration of the greater part of the cultural elite between 1936 and 1939 was wholly unprecedented. Taken together with the massive exodus of refugees from the civil war, it represented a truly momentous event in the country’s history.”

Spain has previously tried to make peace with its past, in 2015 offering [citizenship to the descendants of Sephardic Jews](#) expelled under the edict of 1492. However, although the 2015 law did not require applicants to be practising Jews or to live in Spain, meeting its requirements was long, complicated and expensive, requiring the applicant to visit Spain, take tests in Spanish language and culture, and prove their

	<p>Sephardic heritage. They also had to establish or prove a special connection with Spain, and pay a designated notary to certify their documents.</p> <p>When the offer closed in 2019, it is estimated about 36,000 applications had been accepted of a total 150,000.</p> <p>The new law offers Latin Americans a way to escape violence and poverty. Already, a steady stream of Argentinians have been arriving in Spain, weary of poor governance, corruption and inflation, which last month was running at 78%. In the past year, a record 33,000 Argentinians have come to Spain and now tens of thousands more are expected.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	10/27 Canada investigates China police stations
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/27/canada-secret-chinese-police-stations-investigation
GIST	<p>Canada's federal police force is investigating reports that clandestine Chinese "police stations" are operating in Toronto amid reports of a global network used to target overseas dissidents.</p> <p>The Royal Canada Mounted Police said it was investigating "reports of criminal activity in relation to the so-called 'police' stations" but did not specify the location of the sites.</p> <p>The police also warned that "foreign states may seek to intimidate or harm communities or individuals within Canada".</p> <p>The revelations come days after the Dutch government said it was investigating two suspected stations.</p> <p>The stations were first identified by Safeguard Defenders, a Spanish civil rights group which alleged the Fuzhou and Qingtian police agencies had between them opened 54 "overseas service centres" in 25 cities across 21 countries, including Canada.</p> <p>Safeguard Defenders identified a residential home, commercial building and convenience store in the greater Toronto area as the locations of the suspected operations.</p> <p>China's embassy has denied the buildings are staffed by police, instead suggesting they are "services stations" meant to offer consular and bureaucratic assistance.</p> <p>"Due to the Covid-19 epidemic, many overseas Chinese citizens are not able to return to China in time for their Chinese driver's licence renewal and other services," the embassy said in a statement. "For services such as driver's licence renewal, it is necessary to have eyesight, hearing and physical examination. The main purpose of the service station abroad is to provide free assistance to overseas Chinese citizens in this regard."</p> <p>The embassy also said the staff were volunteers and not police officers, adding: "They are not involved in any criminal investigation or relevant activity."</p> <p>But recently unsealed court documents in New York corroborate accusations that China has engaged in a foreign interference campaign, harassing and surveilling Chinese nationals abroad. In one case, a Chinese citizen living in Canada was pressured to return to China to face charges of embezzling nearly C\$380,000 (US\$280,000) in public funds.</p> <p>In the court document, the US alleges the pressure campaign is related to China's Central Commission for Discipline Inspection and Operation Fox Hunt, which has been used to target both corruption and dissent.</p> <p>Canadian lawmakers have previously warned of the issue. At a House of Commons special committee on Canada-China relations in early October, the Conservative member of parliament Michael Chong asked Canada's foreign affairs ministry about the existence of the police stations.</p>

	<p>Weldon Epp, director general of North Asia and Oceania at Global Affairs Canada said there was space for “legitimate police liaison cooperation” between countries.</p> <p>“But the allegations reported in the press would fall well outside of that, and we would have deep concerns if they proved to be true.”</p> <p>The allegations are likely to once again strain relations between Ottawa and Beijing, which have remained tense following a string of disputes between the two nations, including the arrests of the Huawei executive Meng Wenzhou, and the Canadian businessmen Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	10/28 Iran projects power beyond Mideast
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/iranian-drones-in-ukraine-project-tehrans-power-beyond-mideast-testing-u-s-europe-11666880851?mod=hp_lead_pos9
GIST	<p>Russia’s expanding use of Iranian drones in Ukraine poses an increasing threat for the U.S. and its European allies as Tehran attempts to project military power beyond the Middle East.</p> <p>In recent weeks, Ukrainian officials say, Russia has launched more than 300 Iranian drones that have targeted military units, power plants and civilian buildings in the capital, Kyiv. The Ukrainian military said it has shot down more than 70% of the drones, but Ukrainian officials are asking the U.S. and NATO allies for more help to counter the threat. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization has vowed to rush hundreds of drone jammers to Ukraine as part of a deepening effort to shore up Ukraine’s air defenses.</p> <p>The wave of attacks has made Iran Moscow’s most important military ally in its faltering campaign in Ukraine and highlighted how Tehran has created one of the world’s most successful drone fleets despite years of Western sanctions.</p> <p>“Drones have become the spearhead of Iranian power projection globally,” said Dr. James Rogers, an associate professor of war studies at the University of Southern Denmark. “Iran has one of the oldest and, arguably, one of the most efficient drone programs in the world.”</p> <p>While the international community focused for years on trying to constrain Iran’s nuclear program, Tehran methodically built an army of drones that reached across the Middle East. Iran and its proxies have been accused of carrying out attacks on everything from U.S. forces in Syria and commercial ships in the Arabian Sea to Israeli cities and Saudi Arabia’s oil industry.</p> <p>Since 2015, Iran and its proxies have fired nearly 1,000 drones in attacks that have killed hundreds of people in Yemen, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Ukraine and the Gulf of Oman, according to the Saudi military and the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project, which collects and analyzes information on protests and violence around the world. Besides Russia, Iran has also sold its drone technology to friendly governments, including Venezuela, Syria and Ethiopia, according to the U.S. Department of Defense.</p> <p>Iranian and Russian officials have repeatedly denied that Tehran has provided Moscow with drones to use in Ukraine. “We strongly reject the baseless accusations of some countries about Russia using Iranian drones in the war against Ukraine,” Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said in a televised address on Wednesday.</p> <p>He invited Ukrainian officials to hold a bilateral meeting with Iran to present any evidence on the claim Iran drones are being used in the war. Earlier this month, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the Russian army only used domestically produced equipment.</p>

Ukrainian investigators dissecting the downed drones used to target civilians and soldiers maintain that they are Iranian in origin and that key parts powering them are made in America, Europe and Asia, according to an analysis viewed by The Wall Street Journal.

The Western-made components that guide, power and steer the drones touch on a vexing problem world leaders face in trying to contain the expanding threat: Although [Western nations have imposed expansive sanctions on Iran](#), the Middle East nation is able to rely on a loosely regulated global supply chain to build its drone fleet.

Ukrainian investigators have traced Iranian drone components back to U.S. companies, including [Texas Instruments](#) Inc., the Dallas-based technology giant. Ellen Fishpaw, a Texas Instruments spokeswoman, said the company is investigating reports that its products were used in the weapons.

“We do not support or condone the use of our products in applications they weren’t designed for,” she said.

Iran’s emergence as one of the world’s most adept purveyors of deadly drones has been decades in the making. Its origins stretch back to the 1970s, when American defense contractor [Textron](#) Inc. helped set up a plant in Isfahan, central Iran, to make military helicopters when the country was ruled by Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, a U.S. ally.

The plant is now run by Iran Aircraft Manufacturing Industries, a military-controlled company, according to Iranian corporate records, Iran’s semiofficial FARS news agency and European security officials.

Iran developed its first crude surveillance drone in the mid-1980s, during its war with neighboring Iraq, after the Shah of Iran was toppled by a revolution and the country was isolated economically. The program was overseen by then-President Ali Khamenei, now the country’s supreme leader, the Fars news agency said.

One of its biggest advances came in 2011 when Iran recovered a downed American Sentinel stealth drone. Weapons experts say that Iran was able to reverse engineer the U.S. technology to create its own version within three years.

Tehran has also established a domestic production strategy, insulating it more from sanctions and spurring its acquisition of parts from a global array of suppliers. In 2018, an aircraft-modeling company in Germany received a routine order for miniature-plane engines from China. Two years later, the device resurfaced in the debris of an explosive drone that Iran-backed rebels used to target civilians in Yemen, according to a January report by [the United Nations sanctions panel on Yemen](#).

Weapons experts also say Iran was able to reverse engineer an Israeli drone captured by its Lebanese ally, Hezbollah, to develop another surveillance drone.

These weapons experts say that Ukraine is now bearing the brunt of Iran’s advanced drone industry, turning the country into a test bed for its weapons.

Russia has asked Iran to supply 2,400 of the Shahed-136 suicide drones to use in Ukraine, according to Ukraine’s intelligence services and President Volodymyr Zelensky. Ukrainian forces have also brought down a larger Mohajer-6 Iranian-made drone that is capable of carrying two bombs.

How quickly Iran can supply so many drones remains an open question. Bernard Hudson, a former Central Intelligence Agency operations officer who is now president of Looking Glass Global Services, a drone consulting firm, estimates that Iran can make about 100 drones a month.

Ukrainian officials have warned that the two types of Iranian drones are just the beginning of Iranian support for Russia. They say Iran plans to send Russia [both cruise and ballistic missiles](#) that it can use in Ukraine.

Norman Roule, a three-decade veteran of the CIA and now a consultant at the U.S.-based advocacy group United Against Nuclear Iran, warned that the combination of drones and missiles one day might be used against Western powers.

“This Ukraine conflict provides Iran with a unique and low-risk opportunity to test its weapons systems against modern Western defenses,” Mr. Roule said. “We rightfully disparage Russian battle performance, but Iran likely also uses this engagement to sharpen the skills of its military.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/28 Credit card debt at pre-pandemic levels
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/credit-card-debt-returns-to-levels-before-covid-19-pandemic-11666928540?mod=hp_lead_pos10
GIST	<p>Credit-card debt recently reached a new milestone: It returned to where it was before the pandemic.</p> <p>Total card balances in the U.S. hit \$916 billion in September, nearly identical to December 2019 levels, according to the credit-reporting firm Equifax Inc. EFX 0.95%increase; green up pointing triangle Balances are up 9% from January and about 23% higher than their pandemic low in April 2021.</p> <p>Card balances fell sharply in the early months of the pandemic after Americans, out of work and stuck at home, cut back on spending. Stimulus checks later padded savings accounts and allowed many to pay down costly debt.</p> <p>When the economy reopened and people went back to work, credit-card issuers launched a big push to get people borrowing again. Many loosened underwriting standards, making it easier for people with lower credit scores to get cards.</p> <p>Now, Americans are spending and borrowing, despite fears that a recession is on the horizon. Missed payments on credit cards, while rising, remain below prepandemic levels.</p> <p>Still, rising card balances could be an early sign of financial pain. Consumers are still paying a higher share of their balances than they were before Covid-19 hit, according to card issuers, but that figure at some lenders is starting to decline. The rising cost of food, gasoline and housing, meanwhile, has strained household budgets, forcing some Americans to use their credit cards to make ends meet.</p> <p>The trillions of dollars in rainy-day funds Americans built up during the pandemic are dwindling. The personal saving rate as a share of disposable personal income fell to 3.3% in the third quarter, one of the lowest readings going back to the late 1940s and down from 26.4% in the second quarter of 2020, according to the Bureau of Economic Analysis.</p> <p>“You have an increasing number of people running out of that excess savings, but it’s small,” said Mark Zandi, chief economist at Moody’s Analytics. “The folks who are the most pressed are starting to turn to debt to supplement their income to maintain their spending.”</p> <p>Some card issuers have begun pulling back on lending to consumers they deem to be the most vulnerable in a recession. Nearly all set aside money to cover loan losses in a potential recession.</p> <p>Consumers had credit-card debt of \$5,529 on average in September. That figure has been rising but remains below its prepandemic peak, according to the credit-score provider VantageScore Solutions LLC.</p> <p>At JPMorgan Chase & Co., credit-card balances that are carried from month to month increased 15% in the third quarter from a year prior, but they remain slightly below prepandemic levels.</p>

“Credit-card borrowing is normalizing, not getting worse,” Chief Executive Jamie Dimon said on a call with analysts earlier this month.

At [Citigroup](#) Inc. and [Bank of America](#) Corp., general-purpose credit-card spending fell slightly from the second to the third quarter while balances increased, evidence that people who are carrying debt from month to month are contributing to rising loan balances.

Interest-earning balances on Citigroup general-purpose cards grew 9% in the third quarter from the same period last year. The bank said it expects those balances to continue to grow in the fourth quarter.

The increases follow a period of record card issuance for borrowers of all stripes. Lenders issued nearly 47 million general-purpose credit cards during the first seven months of the year, up 17% from a year earlier and the highest level for the period, according to data from Equifax that goes back to 2011. Nearly 9.6 million of those cards were issued to people with credit scores below 620, the highest for the period and up 8% from a year earlier.

Prime and subprime consumers who received a new general-purpose card in July were given average spending limits of \$5,115 and \$892, respectively, up about 15% from a year prior and nearly back to prepandemic levels.

Despite rising interest rates, issuers have ramped up offers for cards that don’t charge interest on purchases or balance transfers for a period. That could be contributing to the increase in balances, because borrowers have less incentive to pay down their debt during the promotional period.

Costly car repairs and higher housing costs led Sarah Shah to start racking up credit-card debt last year. This summer, she transferred about \$10,000 of the roughly \$13,000 she owes to a new card with a temporary 0% rate.

“It just creeps up on you when you have a bunch of things that go wrong,” she said.

There are early signs of caution. Some 2.2% of banks eased credit standards for credit-card approvals in the second quarter, according to a Federal Reserve survey of senior loan officers, down from 14.6% in the first quarter and 39.3% a year prior.

Discover Financial Services began tightening underwriting in the third quarter for new card approvals for “segments that will be most volatile in a downturn” such as people who are on the “lower end of prime,” Chief Executive Roger Hochschild said on an earnings call.

Still, he said, credit cards remain an attractive area for banks.

“I’d say overall, a very good environment,” Mr. Hochschild said in an interview. “And that’s part of why you’re seeing such strong growth.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 Iranian forces open fire on protesters
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/10/27/iran-protest-mahabad-mahsa-amini/
GIST	<p>Violence erupted Thursday in the city of Mahabad in the Kurdish region of western Iran, where protesters attacked government buildings, including the offices of the governor and the mayor. Security forces responded by opening fire on demonstrators, according to videos posted on social media and verified by The Washington Post.</p> <p>At least two people were killed and dozens were wounded, activists said, though The Post could not independently verify their claims.</p>

The clashes came after security forces killed a young man named Ismail Mowludi in Mahabad the day before during a ceremony commemorating the 40th day since the death of Mahsa Amini, the Kurdish woman who has become the symbol of a nationwide uprising. Thousands took to the streets Wednesday in Amini's hometown of Saqez and across the region.

The unrest in Mahabad started after Mowludi was buried early Thursday and large crowds joined the funeral procession as it moved toward the center of the city, chanting "Kurdistan, Kurdistan will be the graveyard of fascists" and "Death to the Dictator," a reference to Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

A video posted online showed a large crowd chanting outside a burning building. Another showed protesters pelting the entrance to the Mahabad governor's office with rocks as shots ring out in the background.

The semiofficial Tasnim news agency denied that security forces used live ammunition and blamed the violence on protesters: "Some in this group take advantage and in their path they attack and throw rocks at any office or institution that they see and destroy public property," the report said.

Protesters across Iran have mostly avoided targeting government buildings, even as they have continued to take to the streets in the face of intensifying violence by security forces. The crackdown has been especially brutal in Kurdish areas, which have long been neglected by the Iranian government, and where residents have described a "military-style" occupation over the last six weeks.

Mowludi's death on a day of mourning appears to have emboldened the protesters, encouraging them to take out their anger on state institutions, according to Rebin Rahmani from the Kurdistan Human Rights Network.

"The people were furious," he said.

By nightfall, demonstrators had taken control of one of the entrances to the city of Mahabad, Rahmani said, and unrest had spread to at least two other cities in the Kurdish region, Baneh and Dehgan.

Mahabad was the capital of a short-lived autonomous Kurdish state in northwest Iran in 1946 and still holds great symbolism for Kurds.

The escalation in the west came a day after an attack on a mosque in the southern city of Shiraz, which killed at least 15 people, according to state media. Though the Islamic State claimed credit for the attack, the Iranian government has sought to link it to the protest movement — an unsupported claim that protesters have broadly ridiculed on social media.

In a clear message to demonstrators Thursday, Khamenei issued a statement calling on security forces and the judiciary to confront "the incendiary enemy and traitorous agents."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 Yakima, Spokane Co's lose \$2M federal aid
SOURCE	https://crosscut.com/news/2022/10/yakima-spokane-counties-forfeit-nearly-2m-federal-rental-aid
GIST	<p>Spokane and Yakima counties lost a combined \$1.9 million in emergency federal rental assistance, the U.S. Treasury reported last week, part of the latest round of a process intended to speed distribution of funds to renters at risk of eviction.</p> <p>Spokane officials will reportedly lose \$1 million from their \$7.2 million allocation. Yakima County gave up \$900,000 in this round of reallocations, adding to a previous \$1.1 million the county handed back to the federal government earlier this year.</p>

Congress [sent more than \\$45 billion](#) to local governments through multiple stimulus packages to pay off renters' debts beginning in early 2021. Later that year, Treasury began recapturing funds from cities, counties and states deemed to be underperforming at getting the money out.

The reshuffling also benefits jurisdictions that demonstrate not just need, but also the capacity to dole out the money quickly, which tend to be bigger cities and states with more renters. The city of Seattle was awarded an additional \$2 million last week. Several Washington tribes will also [receive millions more](#), including the Puyallup Tribe (\$2.1 million), the Yakama Nation Housing Authority (\$1.4 million), and the Lummi Indian Business Council (\$1.6 million).

Yakima County's previous [loss of \\$1.1 million](#) earlier this year made it the only county in the state forced to give back rental assistance funding at the time.

The latest reallocation pulled back money from jurisdictions that had spent less than 20% of their most recent funding as of April 30, according to [guidance posted on Treasury's website](#).

Spokane Neighborhood Action Partners, which administers Spokane County's rental assistance program, did not return multiple phone calls, nor did the county's housing department. Spokane's county commissioners were also unavailable for comment on Wednesday.

Esther Magasis, director of Yakima County's Human Services Department, told Crosscut the Treasury's spending deadline hit as they transitioned from a manual system with five different agencies screening applications to an online system run by Seattle-based tech company LiveStories. The speed and volume of payments have since accelerated from about \$700,000 to over \$1 million per month under the new system, she wrote in an email to Treasury officials.

"There was sort of a planned period at the beginning of 2022 when ... our new system hadn't yet opened and we had to let those [old] contracts spend down before we could open the new system up," Magasis said.

The county has met every spending deadline since the online system launched, she added, and does not expect to see any more funding reallocated. Yakima now reports spending [\\$3.8 million of its second-round allocation](#), which totals about \$5.1 million following last week's reduction.

Magasis previously said short staffing and a 2014 decision to disband the Human Services Department had [left the county playing catch-up](#) throughout the pandemic, especially when faced with creating a system for distributing more than \$13 million from a new federal program on an urgent timeline.

Erika Rutter, staff attorney at Yakima County Volunteer Attorney Services, previously told Crosscut that her clients – many of whom are farmworkers with limited English proficiency – had struggled to navigate complex paperwork requirements and secure in-person or phone appointments required to apply. Some who qualified for aid waited months or lost their homes in eviction proceedings while waiting for payments.

Rutter wrote in a recent email that her clients are now getting applications processed in about a week and seeing payments go out to landlords three to five days later.

"Overall, I am much more satisfied with LiveStories managing the rental assistance program than I was with the county," she wrote.

For jurisdictions that fail to spend out by the end of 2022, Treasury may reallocate funds as many as three more times, according to [guidance](#) it released in June.

[Return to Top](#)

SOURCE	https://www.usnews.com/news/national-news/articles/2022-10-27/u-s-military-dismisses-russia-as-acute-threat-as-putin-boasts-of-new-world-order
GIST	<p>Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin on Thursday dismissed the potency of the threat Russia poses to the United States amid new claims from President Vladimir Putin that his ongoing military campaign in Ukraine serves as a first step in the implementation of a new world order.</p> <p>Speaking at the public release of the National Defense Strategy, the fourth iteration of a key planning document his office generates roughly every four years, Austin debuted a new classification for the danger posed by Moscow.</p> <p>“The NDS describes Russia as an ‘acute threat,’” Austin said. “And we chose the word ‘acute’ carefully.”</p> <p>“Unlike China, Russia can’t systematically challenge the United States over the long term,” he continued. “But Russian aggression does pose an immediate and sharp threat to our interests and values. And Putin’s reckless war of choice against Ukraine – the worst threat to European security since the end of World War II – has made that very clear for the whole world.”</p> <p>His characterization almost immediately drew the ire of analysts who thought Austin understated the Russian menace, pointing to the country’s cunning use of cyber operations to undermine American civil society and public trust in government, to say nothing of the vast nuclear arsenal the Kremlin maintains.</p> <p>“Russia has shown that it is capable of using information operations to produce strategic effects at very little cost that have caused societal dysfunction and impacted our democratic institutions. More than other adversaries have achieved,” Alex Plitsas, a non-resident senior fellow with the Atlantic Council and war veteran, wrote on Twitter. “Look at the results these operations are achieving. [They] don’t require bombs.”</p> <p>But Austin’s words echoed previous dismissals from the Obama administration, which infamously described Putin and his regime as a “regional power” – an insult that many analysts believe in part fueled the Russian leader’s decision to first invade Ukraine in 2014.</p> <p>The secretary spoke at a time of particularly heightened concern regarding Russia’s latest invasion of Ukraine that Putin launched eight months ago. Devastating and embarrassing losses on the battlefield have, Pentagon officials say, fueled the Russian leader’s increasingly bellicose threats to employ nuclear weapons as a way to gain new battlefield advantages. Russian assertions that the Ukrainian government is planning to deploy a “dirty bomb” – a weapon that employs nuclear materials – represent a potential pretext for it to launch its own nuclear weapons, Western officials and analysts believe. Kyiv has denied the claims.</p> <p>Indeed, while Austin was speaking from the podium at the Pentagon, Putin himself was giving a sweeping, densely detailed, Soviet-style address from the Valdai International Discussion Club, a Moscow-based foreign policy forum. He made dramatic claims about the grandeur that he says accompanies the Kremlin’s mission in the former Soviet state.</p> <p>“We are standing on a historical frontier,” Putin said, describing what he considers the beginning of “probably the most dangerous, unpredictable and, at the same time, important decade” since the end of World War II.</p> <p>He described Russia’s mission in Ukraine – which he claims centers on defeating a neo-Nazi regime in Kyiv that threatens every Russian citizen – as “revolutionary” to a certain extent in that it connects with a chain of conflicts that will affect all mankind.</p> <p>Putin claimed he was helping build “a symphony of human civilization” by shaping a new world order in which every system of world views would be taken into account.</p>

He said Russia's conflict is with Western elites, not necessarily the West itself, employing language similar to that of American conservatives. And the former KGB officer likewise cast himself as of the "lower classes," not the elites, due to his modest upbringing – another unsubtle attempt to show sympathy with the [300,000 young men he has forced into military service](#) to support the flagging military campaign in Ukraine, a move that spurred [widespread protests and mass flight](#) from Russia.

He appeared to downplay the potential employment of nuclear weapons, saying, "We don't need a nuclear strike on Ukraine. There is no point, politically or militarily."

The Pentagon, like other lead agencies within the Biden administration, has said the nuclear threats Putin has put forward have not yet changed anything about America's own military posture, nor does it affect the key strategy document that Austin released on Thursday.

"I would not suggest that it changes our calculus, but it does focus the mind," a senior defense official told reporters at the Pentagon shortly before Austin spoke. The official later added of Russia's battlefield losses, "The practical effect of their depletion of their conventional forces is unfortunately putting an even greater reliance on their nuclear forces."

The strategy similarly points out that Russia appears to ally itself increasingly with China – the burgeoning military power that the Pentagon has considered its premier threat ever since a dramatic shift in thinking toward the communist nation first outlined by the Trump administration in the last defense strategy document it created in 2018.

Though the relationship between the two nations "continues to increase in breadth," according to the latest document, it also notes, "diverging interests and historical mistrust may limit the depth of their political and military cooperation."

Another senior defense official speaking on the condition of anonymity confirmed prior reporting from U.S. News and elsewhere of [Chinese leaders' private concerns about Russia's invasion](#), saying the Chinese Communist Party "was pretty surprised by the unprovoked aggression that Russia launched against Ukraine."

"They seem to have much more similar visions of the world," the official said, "and those are not really visions that are aligned with the rules-based international order that we and so many of our allies and partners believe is best for everyone."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 Somalia asks US for more drone strikes
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/27/us/politics/somalia-shabab-us-strikes.html
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — The Biden administration is weighing a request by Somalia that the United States loosen restrictions on its military drone strikes targeting Shabab militants in the troubled Horn of Africa nation, according to several U.S. officials.</p> <p>The request comes as a new Somali administration has launched an offensive against Al Shabab, with several local clan militias joining the central government's fight. President Biden also recently redeployed 450 U.S. troops to Somalia, reversing former President Donald J. Trump's abrupt withdrawal in January 2021.</p> <p>But the Somali government wants U.S. military operators to be able to attack groups of Shabab militants who might pose a threat to Somali forces — even if they are not firing upon them at the moment, the officials said. Such a move would further escalate American involvement in the long-running counterterrorism war.</p> <p>In May, Somalia elected a new president, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, who also held the role from 2012 to 2017. Since returning to office, he has made pushing back Al Shabab a top priority. He has ordered</p>

Somalia's fledgling national army to go on the offensive in the countryside, is planning for the delivery of services to stabilize areas that have been newly liberated and is trying to forge stronger partnerships with both clan leaders and international allies.

At the same time, local clan militias in the Hiran region of Hirshabelle State, in central Somalia, are fighting Al Shabab ferociously after turning against them over their heavy-handed rule and taxation. The Somali government has been resupplying the militias with ammunition and other aid.

Some U.S. officials are hoping that the long-troubled country may be turning a corner. Others are more skeptical that Mr. Mohamud will be able to sustain the current "honeymoon" period, as one official described it, given Somalia's history of dysfunction, the limited capacity of its central government, the extraordinary complexities of its clan dynamics and a drought-driven famine.

This article is based on interviews with more than half a dozen U.S. military, diplomatic and administration officials, along with several Somali officials and people with humanitarian and policy organizations focused on Somalia. Most spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss diplomatic and military matters; several declined to talk about the request for expanded strikes, although none denied that it had been made.

In a statement, Adrienne Watson, a spokeswoman for the National Security Council, emphasized that the United States was trying to bolster stability in Somalia and counter Al Shabab not just through military force but by building the Somali government's capacity and addressing humanitarian needs.

"As a part of this holistic approach, the U.S. military works to train and support Somali partners who are catalyzing offensive action against Al Shabab, while judiciously applying high-end capacity only to disrupt the most serious threats," she said.

Somalia is now the center of the U.S. counterterrorism drone war. The military has justified most of its strikes there as the "collective self-defense" of Somali partner forces who have sometimes needed bailing out as they stepped up offensive operations against Al Shabab. That includes a Sept. 18 strike that the military said killed 27 militants.

The Pentagon's Africa Command announced this week that the latest strike took place on Sunday and killed two militants, bringing the total number of known U.S. drone attacks in the country this year to 11. The command categorized 10 of those as collective self-defense. The 11th, on Oct. 1, apparently killed a senior Shabab leader, Abdullahi Nadir, who was on a list of about a dozen Mr. Biden had approved targeting if the military located them.

Mr. Biden recently signed a [policy governing drone strikes](#) outside war zones that requires presidential approval to target specific militants. The policy covers Somalia, but it exempts self-defense strikes from the centralized vetting requirement.

The Somali request, described by officials on the condition of anonymity, is said to ask the United States to more broadly define what can count as a collective self-defense strike. It could also be interpreted as asking to deem certain parts of Somalia as a war zone, where it is permissible to target members of an enemy force based only on their status, even if they pose no imminent threat.

The request was still being evaluated, the officials said, and the Pentagon had not yet formally presented it to the White House with any accompanying policy recommendation. Several officials said it was likely to face sharp scrutiny in the interagency review process.

The reinvigorated American military presence in Somalia stands in contrast to Mr. Biden's decision last year to withdraw all U.S. troops from Afghanistan, which he justified in part by saying that "[it is time to end the forever war.](#)"

The United States is one of several countries advising and assisting the Somali government in its fight against Al Shabab. Members of the African Union have about 18,000 peacekeeping forces in Somalia. Turkey, the European Union, Britain, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt are also involved.

Biden administration officials have justified the continued U.S. role in fighting Al Shabab by describing the group as the [deadliest and wealthiest](#) of Al Qaeda's global branches. Intelligence officials estimate that Al Shabab has roughly 7,000 to 12,000 members and annual income — including from taxing or extorting civilians — of about \$120 million.

In January 2020, Al Shabab attacked an air base at [Manda Bay, Kenya, killing three Americans](#). That December, prosecutors in Manhattan charged a man accused of being a Shabab operative from Kenya with plotting a Sept. 11-style attack on an American city. He had been arrested in the Philippines as he trained to fly planes.

Some analysts are wary of continuing to carry out U.S. military strikes and training Somali security forces, saying that the approach has not weakened Al Shabab over the past decade.

“The U.S. military can only help tip the scales if there is a collective focus on reconciliation and a recognition by all actors that Al Shabab will not be defeated militarily,” said Sarah Harrison, a former Pentagon lawyer who is now a senior analyst at the International Crisis Group and the lead author of a coming report on U.S. policy in Somalia.

But in interviews, a range of senior military, diplomatic and national security officials described the moment as one of cautious optimism for weakening Al Shabab. Tricia Bacon, a Somalia specialist at American University in Washington and a former counterterrorism analyst for the State Department, echoed those views.

“The drone strikes undoubtedly add pressure and, besides local community revolts, are one of the few things Al Shabab fears,” she said. But she added, “This may be yet another instance of Al Shabab being pushed out of places, only for the government to fail to perform in those places or local community forces becoming predatory.”

Since returning to power this year, Mr. Mohamud has vowed to eject Al Shabab from areas it has controlled for years. In speeches on television, in mosques and in public halls, he has called on Somalis to join the offensive.

“Somalia will triumph over the enemy that has wrongfully devastated the country, its people and its religion,” Mr. Mohamud said in a recent [video posted on Twitter](#).

His administration is trying to [clamp down on the group's access](#) to [mainstream banking services](#) and to capitalize on the uprising by local militias against Al Shabab. Known as ma'awisley, these groups have liberated dozens of villages in central Somalia and killed hundreds of Shabab fighters.

Somali and U.S. officials hope the movement could be the start of a broader clan uprising against Al Shabab, which [gained strength](#) in recent years amid widespread grievances with the government over corruption, [internecine political battles](#) and failures to deliver basic services.

“These clan militias are the closest on the ground and have the most motivation to support the government,” said Samira Gaid, the executive director of Hiraal Institute, a research center in Mogadishu, the Somali capital. “Their momentum could be decisive.”

While a handful of other clan militias have since joined the ma'awisley movement, for now the prospect that it will spread widely remains aspirational. Al Shabab is moving to repair relations with other local clan leaders, officials say, while punishing the rebellious ones — including by blowing up wells and cellphone towers and killing civilians. The likelihood of a new round of famine is adding to the uncertainty.

The ferocity of the militias is also reason for caution, officials say. In the short term, it raises the prospect of pushing Al Shabab out of contested territory. But in the longer term, if they become too strong, they could produce a new era of warlordism.

Two recent episodes in the Hiran region illustrate the precariousness of that balance.

After a battle last month, one militia [beheaded some captured Shabab militants](#). This month, the regional governor of Hiran, Ali Jeyte, delivered a [fiery televised speech](#) that announced bounties to people who kill Shabab militants — offering to pay for “their hanging heads or testicles” — and called for killing their wives.

In an interview, Hussein Sheikh-Ali, the Somali national security adviser, called the beheadings a mistake and said the national government had asked the militia to stop committing such acts. He also said Mogadishu was contacting the regional governor and other influential figures in Hiran to dissuade attacks on civilian relatives of Shabab members.

“The families of these militants are not free, and we want them to surrender and come to us,” he said, adding, “It is not government policy to kill civilians, and we discourage them.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 Since 2021: 1.8M more illegals living in US
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/oct/27/18-million-more-illegal-immigrants-living-in-the-u/
GIST	<p>New census numbers indicate that 1.8 million illegal immigrants have settled in the U.S. since President Biden took office, powering a surge in the ratio of foreign-born to native-born residents, according to a new report Thursday.</p> <p>The Center for Immigration Studies says there are now 47.9 million immigrants — legal and illegal — now in the U.S.</p> <p>That’s 14.6% of the total population, and if trends continue the country will set a record for the largest share of immigrants by the middle of next year. That will cross the previous high of 14.8% set around the turn of the 20th century.</p> <p>All told, some 2.9 million more immigrants now live in the U.S. than did in January 2021, when Mr. Biden was sworn in. Among those are the 1.8 million illegal immigrants — a population larger than the size 12 states, including West Virginia, Hawaii, New Hampshire and Maine.</p> <p>“The new data reflects the ongoing crisis at the border created by the Biden administration policies that are encouraging so many illegal immigrants to come into the country,” said Steven A. Camarota, the lead researcher on the new study, which relies on numbers from the U.S. Census Bureau’s monthly Current Population Survey.</p> <p>The numbers add depth to the ongoing chaos at the border.</p> <p>Homeland Security’s data shows more than 4 million illegal immigrants have been encountered at the borders since Mr. Biden took office. The department says the border isn’t open, and says many of those encountered have been sent home.</p> <p>The new numbers reveal the other side of that coin: The hundreds of thousands who sneaked in without being detected, and even more who jumped the border and were allowed to stay.</p> <p>Mr. Camarota said the 1.8 million new illegal immigrants are a net increase. Given the usual pace of deaths, returns home and gaining legal status, the actual gross number of new illegal arrivals is well over 2 million.</p>

There have been previous surges of new illegal immigrants settling in the U.S., but those came in defiance of the law and snuck by the Border Patrol.

This current surge is the first time so many have been caught but released under the government's policies, Mr. Camarota said.

"We never had a situation where possibly a majority of people encountered at the border are released into the United States as a matter of policy," he said. "That's a complete break with the past."

Discussions of immigration have become mired in vicious debates over motives and racism in recent years, and those have taken on acute proportions ahead of this year's elections. Immigrant-rights activists accuse those who complain about the border chaos of embracing dangerous rhetoric of "invasion" or theories about attempts to "replace" Americans with newcomers.

"To a deeply disturbing degree, Republicans are relying on nativist lies and white nationalist conspiracies as a core part of their midterm closing argument, while the remainder of the GOP, including its leadership, languishes in complicit silence," Zachary Mueller, political director for America's Voice, said in a memo earlier this month.

Immigration advocates also say the country needs foreign newcomers to bolster the U.S. economy, and cite "missing" workers who didn't come during the pandemic.

Mr. Camarota said his numbers suggest there is no dearth.

In September 2019, before the pandemic, there were 27.4 million foreigners in the workforce. That dipped to 24.4 million at the depths of the pandemic but has since rebounded to 29.4 million as of last month. That's an increase of 2 million more than pre-pandemic levels and 5 million over the pandemic low point.

"We're certainly not missing any immigrant workers," Mr. Camarota said.

He said the near-record ratio of immigrants in the U.S. raises questions about the country's ability to assimilate them.

"I think everybody agrees we want to successfully integrate immigrants into our society. How that happens is partly a function of the size of the immigrant population," he said. "If you worry about linguistic or cultural isolation and the critical mass to do that, then the size and share of the population that is immigrants matters a whole lot."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 Women most at-risk long Covid symptoms
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/oct/27/women-most-risk-long-covid-symptoms-study-finds/
GIST	<p>Women are the most at risk for so-called long COVID symptoms that last for more than two months after infection, according to a new study.</p> <p>Researchers surveyed 16,091 U.S. adults who had tested positive for COVID-19 two months earlier. They found that 76.1% of long COVID cases occurred among women, compared to 23.9% among men. Their study was published Thursday in JAMA Network Open.</p> <p>Long COVID survivors have reported experiencing extreme fatigue, loss of taste, inability to smell, breathlessness and muscle weakness months after no longer testing positive. In the most extreme cases, they have been unable to return to work for up to six months after infection.</p>

“I hope our work will be a reminder that we need to understand not only what causes long COVID, but how to treat it,” said lead researcher Dr. Roy H. Perlis, a psychiatrist at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston.

The survey was conducted online from February 2021 to July 2022, and researchers made an effort to avoid over-sampling women, whom clinicians say are more likely than others to seek medical care. The average age of respondents was 40.

Overall, 15% of adults from all 50 states responding to the survey said they experienced long COVID symptoms.

Dr. Amesh A. Adalja, a senior scholar at the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security, said the study echoes other reports of long COVID being more common in women than men.

“It’s unclear, at this time, what explains this discrepancy. But there are hypotheses about long COVID being linked to immune system dysfunction and females are well known to be more prone to auto-immune disorders,” said Dr. Adalja, an infectious disease specialist. “There is a major need for more research to unravel the risk factors, the mechanics, and the prognosis of long COVID.”

In logistic regression models, the study found that the odds of experiencing long COVID symptoms increased with the age of survey respondents for each decade after 40.

Vaccinated adults were significantly less likely than the unvaccinated to report long COVID.

While 87% of unvaccinated patients reported long COVID symptoms, only 10.6% of those who finished a primary vaccination series before testing positive said the same.

“I think knowing that long COVID is becoming less of a complication and that vaccination has a protective effect are important data,” said Dr. Carlos del Rio, president-elect of the Infectious Diseases Society of America, commenting on the study.

Dr. del Rio, a professor at Emory University School of Medicine, added that the study highlights the need for women over 40 to be “followed closely” after testing positive.

Other doctors agreed, saying more research is needed to treat long COVID symptoms.

“I strongly believe we need to explore and assure that screening for long COVID is occurring amongst all outpatient touch clinics in an effort to assure there are no current health care disparities,” said Dr. Panagis Galiatsatos, a physician at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 Jobless claims inch higher still remains low
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/oct/27/us-unemployment-claims-inched-higher-but-remain-ve/
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (AP) — Slightly more Americans applied for unemployment benefits last week as the labor market remains one of the healthiest parts of an uneven U.S. economy.</p> <p>Jobless claims for the week ending Oct. 22 inched up by 3,000 to 217,000 from 214,000 the previous week, the Labor Department reported Thursday.</p> <p>The four-week moving average rose to 219,000 from 212,250 the previous week.</p> <p>Applications for jobless claims, considered a proxy for layoffs, have remained historically low even as the Federal Reserve has cranked up its benchmark borrowing rate in an effort to cool the economy and tame inflation.</p>

	<p>Fed officials have warned that the unemployment rate will likely have to rise as part of their fight against rising prices, and the most recent government jobs report likely snuffed out any hope that the Fed would pause rate increases when it meets in next week.</p> <p>American employers slowed their hiring in September but still added 263,000 jobs and the unemployment rate fell from 3.7% to 3.5%, matching a half-century low.</p> <p>Earlier this month, the government reported that inflation in the United States accelerated in September, with the cost of housing and other necessities intensifying pressure on families and businesses.</p> <p>Four-decade high inflation has prompted the Federal Reserve to keep raising its key interest rate, which is currently in a range of 3% to 3.25%. A little more than six months ago, that rate was near zero. The sharp rate hikes have pushed mortgage rates up near 7%, and made other borrowing costlier. The Fed hopes that higher interest rates will slow borrowing and spending and push inflation closer to its traditional 2% target.</p> <p>The U.S. economy rebounded in the third quarter, the government reported Thursday, expanding by 2.6% after contracting in the first half of the year.</p> <p>The total number of Americans collecting unemployment aid rose by 55,000 to 1.44 million for the week ending Oct. 15, its highest level in seven months, but still not a worrisome level.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/28 Day 247 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/28/russia-ukraine-war-at-a-glance-what-we-know-on-day-247-of-the-invasion
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Russian president, Vladimir Putin, said the war in Ukraine is part of Russia's wider struggle against western domination. "We are standing at a historical frontier: Ahead is probably the most dangerous, unpredictable and, at the same time, important decade since the end of World War Two," he said. The Ukraine offensive, he said in a speech addressed to the Valdai Discussion Club, a gathering of Russian specialists, on Thursday. He added the war was simply part of the "tectonic shifts of the entire world order" and that "the historical period of the west's undivided dominance over world affairs is coming to an end". • Putin said he ordered his defence minister to call top Nato commanders this week over the potential detonation of a "dirty bomb" in Ukraine. Putin claimed that Russia knew "about an incident with a so-called 'dirty bomb' being prepared", and that Russia knew "where, generally, it was being prepared" in a speech near Moscow on Thursday. He gave no evidence of the alleged plot, which included the possibility of the device being loaded on to a Tochka-U or other tactical missile, detonated and then "blamed on Russia". • Fighting on the ground appears to have slowed in recent days, with Ukrainian officials saying tough terrain and bad weather had held up their main advance in the southern Kherson province. On Thursday a close ally of Putin, Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov, said 23 of his soldiers had been killed and 58 others wounded in a Ukrainian artillery attack this week in Kherson region. After the attack, Chechen forces carried out a revenge attack and killed about 70 Ukrainians, he claimed. • Ukrainians living in and around Kyiv have been told of a "sharp deterioration" in the region's electricity supply after a fresh wave of Russian strikes aimed at sapping public morale as the country's cold winter approaches. A new timetable of scheduled blackouts will be introduced in Kyiv and the surrounding area over the coming days designed to prevent uncontrolled blackouts and will be stricter and longer. Residents in Kyiv apartment buildings have started leaving small packages of snacks in lifts to be used in case people get stuck during a blackout. • Russian-installed authorities in Ukraine's occupied region of Zaporizhzhia ordered phone checks on local residents on Thursday, announcing the implementation of military censorship

	<p>under Putin’s martial law decree. “From today in the Zaporizhzhia region, law enforcement officers have begun a selective preventing check of the mobile phones of citizens,” the Moscow-appointed official Vladimir Rogov said.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moscow has said that provisions of the Black Sea grain deal to ease Russian agricultural and fertiliser exports were not being met, and that it was yet to make a decision on whether the agreement should be extended. Foreign ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova told reporters that the west had not taken sufficient steps to ease sanctions on Russia’s logistics, payments and insurance industries to facilitate Russia’s exports. • The United States has not seen anything to indicate that Russia’s ongoing annual ‘Grom’ exercises of its nuclear forces may be a cover for a real deployment, US defence secretary Lloyd Austin said on Thursday. “We haven’t seen anything to cause us to believe, at this point, that is some kind of cover activity,” Austin told reporters. • An oil depot in the Russian-occupied city of Shakhtarsk, in Ukraine’s eastern Donetsk, was engulfed in flames overnight on Wednesday. The city’s Russian-installed mayor, Alexander Shatov, claimed the fire was caused by Ukrainian shelling of the railway station. • The US is sending Ukraine a new \$275m package of weapons and other aid, in a move to bolster the effort to drive Russian forces out of key areas in the south as the winter closes in, US officials said on Thursday. Officials said there are no major new weapons in the package, which is expected to be announced on Friday. • Ukrainian authorities say they will launch a criminal case against Russia’s children’s rights commissioner, accusing her of enabling the abduction and forced adoption of thousands of vulnerable Ukrainian children. Maria Lvova-Belova said this week that she herself has adopted a boy seized by the Russian army in the bombed-out city of Mariupol. Last month, she was sanctioned by the west over allegations that she masterminded the removal of more than 2,000 children from Ukraine’s Donetsk and Luhansk regions. According to Ukraine, she orchestrated a new policy to facilitate their forced placement with “foster families” in Russia. • Russian journalist and Putin’s rumoured goddaughter has fled to Lithuania, intelligence services in Vilnius said, after police in Moscow raided one of her homes. Ksenia Sobchak is the daughter of the former mayor of St Petersburg Anatoly Sobchak, whom Putin has previously described as his mentor.
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	10/27 Kyiv ‘sharp deterioration’ electric supply
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/27/kyiv-facing-sharp-deterioration-electric-supply-russian-strikes
GIST	<p>Ukrainians living in and around Kyiv have been told of a “sharp deterioration” in the region’s electricity supply after a fresh wave of Russian strikes aimed at sapping public morale as the country’s cold winter approaches.</p> <p>A local energy supplier, Yasno, warned that existing blackouts could last a lot longer than a previously planned schedule of four-hour outages and that the capital already faced an electricity deficit of about 30% or more.</p> <p>Oleksiy Kuleba, the governor of the Kyiv region, said the area, including the capital city, was victim of Russian attacks on Ukraine’s national grid. “A number of critical facilities have been disabled,” he added.</p> <p>Russia has brought Ukraine’s electricity system to a crisis in a little over a fortnight by switching the focus of its missile and drone attacks to power stations and the distribution grid.</p> <p>In its update, Yasno said Kyiv normally consumed 1,000-2,000MW of electricity but now the estimated available power is 600-800MW. Warning that the overnight destruction had been serious, the company said: “We have a sharp deterioration of the energy supply situation.”</p>

President Volodymyr Zelenskiy [has previously estimated](#) that 30% of Ukraine's power stations have been damaged or destroyed, although the figure is now likely to be greater. Gas and water supplies have also been targeted in [attacks that began on 10 October](#), causing disruption that in some cases will take years to fix.

Although October has been relatively warm by recent standards, the weather turns sharply colder from November and the night-time temperature in many parts of Ukraine can hit lows of -10C (14F) and even -20C.

Zelenskiy said on Wednesday night he had held an emergency meeting to discuss the energy situation earlier that day. Politicians, officials and suppliers discussed how to protect sites, repair damage, and to ensure people would still have energy.

"Conscious energy consumption is now needed by all Ukrainians. Please choose your own scheme for limiting electricity consumption while there is a shortage in the general power system," the president added.

Ukraine had traditionally enjoyed a surplus of energy but is now facing its most serious civilian crisis since the early phases of the war – with rolling blackouts of several hours becoming normal across the country.

People have been reminded to use electricity sparingly in mornings and evenings, and to carefully regulate the use of energy-intensive appliances, while businesses are frequently operating with sharply reduced lighting to save power.

In Kyiv, some people in the city's apartment buildings have started leaving small packages of water and snacks in lifts to be used in case people are unfortunate enough to get stuck inside during a blackout.

Three regions around Kyiv, covering the Chernihiv, Cherkasy and Zhytomyr oblasts, would also face a reduced energy supply following the overnight attacks, warned Ukrenergo, the operator of the country's national grid.

Zelenskiy also discussed the situation at Kakhovka hydroelectric plant, near the current fighting in the south of the country, which Ukraine says Russia has mined and could blow up with devastating consequences for settlements downstream as well as further hitting energy supply.

Russian sources have indicated that if the 30-metre-high dam across the Dnieper River were to be blown up it would be the work of Ukrainians. Fighting continues about 20 miles north of the dam, with Ukraine trying to advance on Kherson, the only city held by Russia west of the Dnieper.

The Ukrainian military said about two dozen [Iranian-made Shahed-136 drones](#) had targeted the south of the country after taking off from Crimea. Air defence forces shot down three over the Mykolaiv region, 15 over the Odesa region, and another over the Vinnytsia region, the military said.

Russia's defence ministry said it had destroyed a Ukrainian military factory producing solid rocket fuel, explosives and gunpowder near the town of Pavlohrad in the Dnipropetrovsk region, as well as repelling Ukrainian advances in the east.

Separately, a senior Russian government official bizarrely suggested Moscow would have the right to shoot down commercial western satellites being used to help Ukraine's war effort, although it was unclear if it had the capacity to carry out the threat.

Konstantin Vorontsov, a senior Russian foreign ministry official, said the use of western satellites to aid the Ukrainian war effort was "an extremely dangerous trend" and he told a UN committee: "Quasi-civilian infrastructure may be a legitimate target for a retaliatory strike."

	The official did not spell out which suppliers he was referring to. Starlink satellites deployed by Elon Musk's SpaceX company have played a big role in Ukrainian military communications, although relations between the billionaire and Kyiv have soured lately.
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/27 Putin ordered 'dirty bomb' claims to NATO?
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/27/vladimir-putin-says-dirty-bomb-claims-to-nato-were-made-on-his-orders
GIST	<p>Vladimir Putin has said that he directly ordered his defence minister to make a series of calls to top Nato commanders this week over the potential detonation of a "dirty bomb" in Ukraine.</p> <p>Russia has escalated its rhetoric in recent weeks by claiming without evidence that Ukraine was preparing to detonate a low-yield radioactive device on its own territory, leading Kyiv and other western observers to consider that Putin may be preparing a "false flag" attack of its own.</p> <p>In a speech near Moscow, Putin claimed once again that Russia knew "about an incident with a so-called 'dirty bomb' being prepared", and that Russia knew "where, generally, it was being prepared".</p> <p>Once again he gave no evidence of the alleged plot, which included the possibility of the device being loaded on to a Tochka-U or other tactical missile, detonated and then "blamed on Russia".</p> <p>Kyiv has strongly denied the accusations and said that Russia is using nuclear blackmail in order to try to block support for its successful counteroffensive against the Russian invasion force.</p> <p>The US president, Joe Biden, on Wednesday said that he had spent "a lot of time" discussing whether Russia may be preparing to use a tactical nuclear weapon in Ukraine.</p> <p>"Let me just say Russia would be making an incredibly serious mistake if it were to use a tactical nuclear weapon," he told reporters. "I'm not guaranteeing that it's a false-flag operation yet. We don't know. It would be a serious, serious mistake."</p> <p>During his speech at the Valdai Club, a Kremlin-aligned foreign policy thinktank, on Thursday, Putin said that assertions about Russia's possible use of nuclear weapons were meant to scare its supporters by indicating "what a bad country Russia is".</p> <p>"We have never said anything about the possible use of nuclear weapons by Russia, but only hinted at the statements made by the leaders of western countries," Putin said in his remarks.</p> <p>In his remarks he also criticised former UK leader Liz Truss for saying she was "ready to do it" regarding the need for a prime minister to be ready to use nuclear weapons.</p> <p>"Well, let's say she blurted out there – the girl seems to be a little out of her mind," said Putin. "How can you say such things in public?" He also blamed Washington for failing to distance itself from Truss' remarks.</p> <p>Putin used the speech as a platform to rail against western countries and their supposed "hegemony", saying the world faced the "most dangerous" decade since the second world war.</p> <p>"We are standing at a historical frontier: Ahead is probably the most dangerous, unpredictable and, at the same time, important decade since the end of World War Two."</p> <p>Asked about losses from the war in Ukraine, Putin said: "Of course, we have costs, and first of all it concerns the losses associated with conducting the [war]. I think about it all the time. There are economic losses."</p>

	<p>Putin also claimed that the Russian economy had survived the worst of sanctions levelled against it by the west following the beginning of the war.</p>
Return to Top	
HEADLINE	10/27 Local Calif. election officials fear for safety
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/oct/27/us-midterms-rural-california-voters-election-officials-fear-for-safety
GIST	<p>Inside the office of the Shasta county clerk and registrar of voters, which runs elections for about 111,000 people in this part of far northern California, Cathy Darling Allen can see all the security improvements she would make if she had the budget.</p> <p>“We have plexi on the counter downstairs for Covid but that won’t stop a person. It’s literally just clamped to the counters,” the county clerk and registrar said. For about \$50,000, the office could secure the front, limiting access to upstairs offices, she estimated. Another county put bulletproof glass in their lobby years earlier, she knew, something officials there at one point considered removing, though not any more.</p> <p>Elections offices didn’t used to think about security in this way, Allen said. Now they can’t afford not to.</p> <p>Following Donald Trump’s refusal to acknowledge his defeat in the 2020 presidential election, Allen says the once low-profile job of non-partisan local election official has transformed in counties like hers. A culture of misinformation has sown doubt in the US election system and subjected officials from Nevada to Michigan to harassment and threats. The FBI has received more than 1,000 reports of threats against election workers in the past year alone.</p> <p>In California, officials in small, rural and underresourced counties such as Shasta say they are encountering hostility and aggressive bullying from residents who believe there is widespread voter fraud – many are inundating local elections offices with public records requests as part of a relentless quest to try to prove their claims.</p> <p>Residents in Shasta county have tried to intimidate election workers while acting as observers, crowding around Allen during a tense election night confrontation in June, and visiting voters’ homes while claiming to be a part of an “official taskforce”. In north-eastern California’s Nevada county, the registrar-elect had to take out a restraining order against residents who harassed her and pushed their way into her office, assaulting a staffer, she said.</p> <p>“It’s really an unprecedented time,” said Kim Alexander, the president of the non-partisan California Voter Foundation, a non-profit organization that works on improving election processes. “A colleague recently referred to it as a sort of madness that’s taken hold.”</p> <p>‘This is our Tiananmen Square’</p> <p>On a Tuesday in September, speaker after speaker went before the Shasta county board of supervisors decrying the “election fraud” they believed – without evidence – is taking place. Dressed in red, white and blue, the residents described their effort as a David-and-Goliath-like battle.</p> <p>“It’s called a citizen’s audit and we’ve been going out and collecting the evidence that shows there is fraud in our process,” one speaker said. “This is our Tiananmen Square. We’re going to stand in front of the tanks and say no more to the machines.”</p> <p>The group of residents casting doubt over Shasta’s elections is small but highly visible, and speaks regularly at county board meetings. They have filed dozens of public records requests to Allen’s office, showed up in large numbers for election observation, and even visited the homes of certain voters while wearing gear labeled “official voter taskforce” – an act that Allen said may amount to voter intimidation.</p>

Their opposition comes amid [broader political upheaval](#) in this rural northern county, stemming from anger among some residents over Trump's loss and pandemic restrictions and vaccine mandates imposed by California's progressive government.

The anger coalesced into an anti-establishment movement, backed with unprecedented outside funding from a Connecticut millionaire and supported by the area's militia groups, that led to the [recall](#) of a longtime county supervisor in February. Behavior seen during that election prompted Allen's office to make security changes, including tracking everyone who enters the facility.

During the primaries in June, when the school superintendent, district attorney and sheriff were on the ballot, a crowd of observers tried to intimidate county staff, Allen said, and someone installed a trail camera outside the office, seemingly intending to monitor election workers. The sheriff stationed deputies outside the office. After four of the candidates backed by the anti-establishment group lost outright – Allen beat her opponent and was re-elected to her fifth-term – the candidates [requested a hand recount](#).

The county's use of Dominion voting machines, which Trump supporters have maligned as part of a false conspiracy theory that the company played a role in swinging the 2020 election for Biden, has drawn particular concern from residents who believe in widespread election fraud. Some of them have attempted to share content with Allen, such as 2000 Mules, a debunked documentary that has promoted false claims about voter fraud.

One high-profile figure in the election denial movement recently held a \$20 event at a church in the area. The grandstanding from people making money from spreading debunked narratives around elections is particularly frustrating for Allen.

If there are problems around elections, she said, she would rely on the actual experts she knows who have worked in the field for decades and share information for free: "I guarantee you, they're not gonna charge people 20 bucks a head at a church in Redding, California, to tell the story. That's making you a dollar, that's not trying to make anything better."

Allen's office has seen aggressive behavior and bullying, she said, but no threats yet. Given the threats elections officials across the US are facing, she suspects it's only a matter of time.

"This is not what anybody signed up for," she said. "I've had people tell me I should have private security. It's not right. But it's the world we live in right now."

'Just another form of harassment'

About 150 miles away in the Sierra Nevada foothills in eastern California, Natalie Adona said her office, too, was experiencing the same challenges: "If it's happening in Shasta, chances are it's also happening here. The loudest would-be disruptors of elections share information between our counties."

Political tensions in Nevada county, which is home to about 100,000 people in historic towns and settlements that were at the center of California's Gold Rush, have been rising since after the 2020 election, said Adona, the assistant county clerk recorder.

Earlier this year a group of residents attempted an aggressive and ultimately unsuccessful campaign to recall the entire board of supervisors, accusing them of enabling "crimes against humanity" for supporting Covid safety measures.

While running for her position this spring, Adona said she and her office were subjected to a months-long public harassment campaign, as well as racist language in an election mailer that featured a darkened photo of her and efforts to disqualify her over false claims that she failed to pay filing fees. After Adona won by nearly 70%, opponents requested a recount.

"I considered it to be just another form of harassment and I think one of the other purposes was to try to get at other documents that aren't normally [obtainable] in the regular observation process," she said.

At the same time, her office has received a flurry of public records requests in recent months that appear to be copy-and-pasted, Adona said: “What we’re today is either deliberate attempts to put a kink in elections process or just sort of an inundation of requests that really reflect how little the requestor knows about elections.”

Adona has also received one threat, she said, which was not actionable by law enforcement.

“It’s certainly not at the level of Georgia or Wisconsin. I do feel fortunate but at the same time a lot of it is unnerving,” she said.

The Nevada county office has increased its budget for security at its headquarters and is working more closely with law enforcement.

“I have the best job in the world. I get to serve voters, I get to serve the public but over the last few years election administration has become harder,” she said. “It’s raised a lot of questions for my team about how we keep in-person election workers safe, how do we keep our staff safe and at the same time offer the same levels of transparency in elections the public deserves.”

‘We haven’t had a break in about five years’

Across the US the climate has grown so tense that [one in five election workers](#) has said they are unlikely to remain in their positions through the next presidential election, according to a survey conducted by the Brennan Center for Justice. About one in six say they have been personally threatened.

Throughout California, small but vocal groups inspired by uninformed or malevolent actors, have been led to believe false narratives about how the state conducts elections, Alexander, of the California Voter Foundation, said, prompting the organization to make the safety of election workers increasingly a focus.

The group, along with the Brennan Center, recently sponsored legislation signed into law by the California governor that allows workers to keep their home addresses confidential.

“I never imagined when I started working on elections security almost 30 years ago that it would include the physical security of people who run our elections,” Alexander said.

But things have changed rapidly, she said. Her organization is trying to support election officials by providing de-escalation training and other resources to their offices. More help is needed, and has been for a long time.

“The chronic underfunding of election administration in the US is one of the conditions that led to the vulnerability of our election workers. If the offices weren’t understaffed and underresourced in the first place they would have more security,” she said.

California election offices were already challenged by back-to-back elections for the last few years, including 2021’s recall election of the governor. Months after that, Shasta county had its local recall election.

“We haven’t had a break in about five years,” said Allen, who is also on the board of directors for the California Voter Foundation. “None of my staff has been able to really disconnect – not for any length of time. I can’t even go to the top of Mount Lassen, where I know no one can get a hold of me.”

In the past, demystifying the election process with guided tours of the office and a walk-through of their procedures helped allay people’s fears, Allen said. This year, the office is attempting to fight against the tide of misinformation and disinformation with a steady trickle of good information publicized by her office through social media and webinars, she said, attempting to reach the voters they can. The county recently hired someone to work on voter education and outreach.

But as misinformation proliferates, there's a growing contingency of people who won't believe any message coming out of the office, she said.

"I don't know how to dissuade people from a belief that they have swallowed wholesale like it's a religion," she said. "We'll still try."

Still, Allen remains hopeful things will get better. On a table in her office is a stack of thank you cards from residents expressing gratitude for her office's work. She won re-election by a massive margin.

"In June, all the folks who believe in some of this bad information about election fraud and elections being stolen – six of those folks ran for office in June's election – and none of them won. Not one of them," she said. "To me, that's the story: the voters of Shasta county saw through that."

As far as the national challenges for election workers, "this too shall pass," Allen said.

"I do think it's going to get worse before it gets better – but it will get better," she said.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 AG bars 'Center for Covid Control' from WA
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/ag-center-for-covid-control-owners-barred-from-doing-business-in-washington
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - The Center for COVID Control—a coronavirus testing company lambasted by the Attorney General as a 'scam'—is now permanently barred from doing business in Washington.</p> <p>AG Bob Ferguson announced Thursday the company owners can no longer run a business in the state.</p> <p>"As a result of our case, the owners of the Center for COVID Control are permanently barred from doing business in Washington, after operating sham COVID testing sites," Ferguson wrote. "The business is reportedly also under investigation by federal authorities and other states."</p> <p>The company came under scrutiny by the Better Business Bureau in Jan. 2022 after being inundated with negative reviews and complaints, accusing them of scamming customers.</p> <p>After these complaints, the Center for COVID Control paused operations at its 300 testing locations.</p> <p>In late January, Ferguson filed a lawsuit against the company, saying they "failed to deliver prompt, valid and accurate results," made deceptive promises of results within 48 hours, and reportedly instructed its employees to "lie to patients on a daily basis."</p> <p>Attorney General Bob Ferguson filed a lawsuit against the Center for COVID Control, alleging the embattled company improperly handled tests and provided fake results.</p> <p>In Feb. 2022, a King County judge granted a preliminary injunction to prevent the company from operating in the state.</p> <p>According to the Attorney General's office, the company billed the federal government \$124 million in tests for 'uninsured' patients. If patients could not immediately provide their insurance information, they were marked as uninsured; by the end of their operations, they had 'uninsured' autofilled on their forms for every patient, even if they were insured.</p> <p>Ferguson's lawsuit against the company demands they stop all false test reporting, pay up to \$12,500 for each violation of the Consumer Protection Act, pay \$5,000 in enhanced penalties for targeting vulnerable populations and relinquish any profits the company made from unlawful conduct.</p> <p>Despite the high dollars amounts, the suit was settled with the company's owners ordered to pay \$42,000 with a 12% interest rate, according to the consent decree.</p>

HEADLINE	10/27 Putin: Russia battling 'pretty strange' elites
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/27/world/europe/ukraine-russia-war-putin.html
GIST	<p>President Vladimir V. Putin declared on Thursday that Russia's battle was with "Western elites," not with the West itself, in a speech seemingly aimed more at winning over political conservatives abroad than his own citizens.</p> <p>Mr. Putin, addressing an annual foreign policy conference outside Moscow, appeared intent on capitalizing on political divisions in the United States and its allies that have only heightened since they began showering Ukraine with military aid to fend off the Russian invasion.</p> <p>Many of the Russian leader's themes were familiar, but they took on particular resonance given the coming midterm elections in the United States and growing discontent in Europe over the costs of the war. "There are at least two Wests," Mr. Putin said.</p> <p>One, he said, is a West of "traditional, mainly Christian values" for which Russians feel kinship. But, he said, "there's another West — aggressive, cosmopolitan, neocolonial, acting as the weapon of the neoliberal elite," and trying to impose its "pretty strange" values on everyone else. He peppered his remarks with references to "dozens of genders" and "gay parades."</p> <p>Mr. Putin, as he often does, portrayed Russia as threatened by the possible expansion of NATO — and the values of its liberal democracies — to countries like Ukraine that were once part of the Soviet Union.</p> <p>He denied that Moscow was preparing to use nuclear weapons in the war in Ukraine. "We have no need to do this," he said. "There's no sense for us, neither political nor military."</p> <p>It is Mr. Putin himself, however, who has raised that prospect, as have other senior Russian officials. And past Kremlin assurances about its intentions have proved unreliable. In the days before the war began, for example, Russia denied that it planned to invade Ukraine.</p> <p>"This is a trick — it shouldn't make anyone relax," said Tatiana Stanovaya, a Russian political analyst, noting that Mr. Putin has blamed the West and its support for an independent Ukraine for every escalation in the war. "His goal is to show that escalation is the product of Western policies."</p> <p>In his nearly four-hour speech and question-and-answer session, the Russian leader did not mention the U.S. midterm elections taking place on Nov. 8. But his barbs against "elites" were a reminder that he still hopes to build alliances with supporters of Russia in the West.</p> <p>In the United States, Republican leaders have said that should they regain control of the House and Senate, President Biden can no longer expect a "blank check" when it comes to sending military aid to Ukraine, despite strong popular backing for that aid. Even some Democrats, faced with restive constituents, have appeared to distance themselves from support for the war effort.</p> <p>And Mr. Putin's attack on "elites" may also play well in the United States, where many Republican candidates have rallied voters by denouncing leaders they say are out of touch, and their liberal approaches to divisive social issues.</p> <p>"In the United States," he said, "there's a very strong part of the public who maintain traditional values, and they're with us. We know about this."</p> <p>Mr. Putin's attempts to gain political ground in the West came as his military is struggling — often without success — to keep hold of the territory it seized in Ukraine after invading on Feb. 24.</p>

In the question-and-answer session, the foreign policy analyst moderating the event, Fyodor Lukyanov, pressed Mr. Putin on those setbacks, and said there was a widespread view that Russia had “underestimated the enemy.”

“Honestly, society doesn’t understand — what’s the plan?” Mr. Lukyanov asked.

Mr. Putin brushed aside the implicit criticism, arguing that Ukraine’s fierce resistance showed that he was right to launch the invasion. The longer Russia had waited, he said, “the worse it would have been for us, the more difficult and more dangerous.”

Mr. Putin also repeated Russia’s claims that Ukraine was preparing to detonate a “dirty bomb” to spread radioactive material on its territory and then blame Moscow. Ukraine and the West say that the claims — for which Russia has offered no evidence — are baseless disinformation that could be used as a pretext by the Kremlin to use a nuclear weapon or a dirty bomb.

Ms. Stanovaya, the political analyst, said Mr. Putin appeared to be trying to harness worldwide anti-establishment sentiment.

“There’s now a sense that he is building an anti-Western coalition on a global scale,” she said. “He doesn’t think he’s been backed into a corner. He thinks he’s a witness to the birth of a new world.”

Mr. Putin himself said he was confident that eventually, the West would be forced to engage Russia and other world powers in talks on a future world order.

“I always believed, and believe, in the power of common sense,” Mr. Putin said. “I am therefore convinced that sooner or later, the new centers of the multipolar world order and the West will have to start a conversation of equals.”

As Western leaders have tried to punish Moscow for the war with crushing sanctions, Russian leaders have sought to build new ties to other nations and strengthen existing ones. On Thursday, the government of one of those nations, China, an increasingly important ally, offered a full-throated endorsement of Mr. Putin’s leadership.

In a telephone call with his Russian counterpart, Foreign Minister Wang Yi said that any attempt to block the progress between the two countries would never succeed, the Chinese ministry said in a statement.

In Ukraine on Thursday, Russian forces pursued their drone and missile assaults on infrastructure, leaving hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians without power. And the Ukrainian military said it was increasing the number of soldiers near its northern border with Belarus, where it noted what it said were unusual troop movements.

Brig. Gen. Oleksii Hromov said Kyiv had no new evidence to suggest that Belarusian or Russian forces were preparing a strike force, but concern has mounted in recent days after the Kremlin dispatched thousands of soldiers to Belarus.

Moscow used Belarus, its closest military and political ally, to help stage its invasion of Ukraine, and the movement of Russian soldiers there is closely monitored by Ukraine and its Western allies.

Ukraine’s government has issued broad statements in recent weeks indicating that it was aware of the threat of an offensive from that direction, with the military releasing a video recently warning that “if the Belarusian army supports Russian aggression,” Kyiv would respond “with our entire arsenal of weapons.”

But the more immediate concern for Ukrainian officials is the continuing use of Belarus as a launching pad for aerial assaults.

	Russia has deployed its troops to airfields in Belarus, and this week, it used Belarusian territory to carry out 10 launches of Iranian-made drones, General Hromov said.
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/27 Memorials killed in Iran galvanize protests
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/27/world/middleeast/iran-protests-mahsa-amini.html
GIST	<p>For the second day in a row, tens of thousands of Iranians took to the streets across the country on Thursday to remember a young woman killed by security forces in a protest movement calling for an end to clerical rule that shows no sign of abating, and once again security forces fired on the crowds, according to witnesses and videos.</p> <p>Videos showed anti-riot police attack and open fire during a memorial service in a rural cemetery near the northwestern town of Visian for Nika Shakarami, 16, whose killing at a street protest in Tehran last month where women were burning their hijabs catapulted her into a national symbol of defiance.</p> <p>“We are all Nika, fight and we will fight back,” chanted the attendees at the service as they threw rocks at the security forces firing at them, videos showed. Women standing around her grave, which was covered in flowers and a black cloth, cut their hair and burned their head scarves, another video showed.</p> <p>“My dear Nika, I am grief stricken by your loss and heartbroken for your dreams,” her mother Nassrin Shakarami said in a speech at the memorial service, calling her daughter a martyr. Others cried, clutching photos of Nika, and sang an ode for war.</p> <p>As the protests aimed at ending Iran’s authoritarian clerical rule entered a sixth week, back-to-back memorial services took place, marking a 40-day mourning period for those killed.</p> <p>On Wednesday, tens of thousands of Iranians commemorated Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old whose death in September first set off the protests. She died after being detained in Tehran by the morality police for allegedly violating the country’s hijab law requiring covered hair and loosefitting robes for women.</p> <p>On Thursday, crowds marked 40 days since the death of Nika. If Ms. Amini’s death ignited the uprising, the killings of Nika and others have fueled it.</p> <p>Image</p> <p>Nika Shakarami, 16, in a photo posted on social media, was also killed.</p> <p>The ceremonies appear to be galvanizing protesters anew and breathing fresh momentum into a movement, led by women and young people.</p> <p>The government’s heavy-handed crackdown — at least 28 children and adolescents have been killed, according to Iran’s Committee to Protect Children’s Rights — has not stopped the protests.</p> <p>But Iranian officials have so far shown no sign of giving in to protester’s demands for change and have blamed the unrest on foreign enemies, and the death toll is continuing to rise.</p> <p>In northwestern Kurdistan Province on Thursday, thousands attended the funeral of a young man, Ismail Mowloudi, killed by security forces a day earlier during protests in the city of Mahabad. They clapped, sang and chanted, “Kurdistan will bury fascists,” videos showed.</p> <p>After his funeral, protesters and security forces clashed outside the governor’s office, according to videos and Iran’s official media, which reported that security forces had stopped the crowd trying to take over the government building.</p> <p>Videos posted on social media and Kurdish and Persian news outlets showed the entrance to the governor’s office on fire, a bank ablaze and windows of nearby businesses smashed.</p>

At least three protesters were killed in Mahabad on Thursday, according to an activist who works with the Kurdistan Human Rights Network, Rebin Rahmani, with the situation in the city remaining tense into the evening.

“There are many government troops in the city. There is no internet in the city. Some government places are burned by the protesters,” Mr. Rahmani said.

Heavy gunfire could be heard on several of the videos showing security forces assaulting protesters in the streets.

Across Iranian cities on Thursday, including in the capital, Tehran, demonstrators chanted “freedom” and “death to the dictator,” and security forces beat them, threw tear gas and opened fire at them, videos and media reports showed.

Clashes also broke out in the city of Baneh in northwestern Iran, where two protesters were killed, according to Hengaw, the Kurdish rights group based in Norway.

In Tehran, a group of young women with their hair uncovered sat on the sidewalk facing off against a line of anti-riot police. In a metro station, dozens of women chanted “Women, Life, Freedom,” videos showed.

In Tehran and the city of Isfahan, doctors were staging peaceful protests outside provincial government medical offices when security forces attacked them and beat them with batons, according to media reports and videos. Fifteen doctors were arrested in Tehran.

Officials blamed protesters for destabilizing the country and paving the way for a shooting attack on Wednesday in a mosque in the central city of Shiraz that killed 15 people, including two children, and was claimed by the Islamic State terrorist group.

Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei sent his condolences to those who died in the mosque attack.

“Every one of us has a responsibility to confront the enemy who is igniting fire and the traitors including those who are ignorant and manipulated,” he said.

In a message to his Iranian counterpart after the Shiraz attack, President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia offered to bolster security cooperation with Iran and help with counterterrorism efforts, according to Russian media reports.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 Study: Covid symptoms can rebound
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/27/well/live/covid-symptoms-rebound-paxlovid.html
GIST	<p>When the antiviral treatment Paxlovid came into wider use for Covid-19 infections earlier this year, doctors who prescribed it and patients who took it noticed that symptoms sometimes flared up again a few days after having gone away. Some people even tested negative before they experienced the rebound. But this puzzling phenomenon can occur whether you take Paxlovid or not, according to a new study.</p> <p>Researchers found that when patients received a placebo instead of treatment, a portion of them still experienced a rebound of their symptoms after they had initially improved.</p> <p>“Symptom return is common,” said Dr. Davey Smith, the chief of infectious diseases and global public health at the University of California, San Diego School of Medicine, who led the study. “It doesn’t mean that things are going south. It’s just the natural way the disease goes.” What is surprising, however, is how many people may experience a rebound, he said.</p>

To understand the natural [variability in coronavirus symptoms](#), Dr. Smith and his team tracked 158 clinical trial participants who had tested positive for Covid from August to November 2020. Each person kept a daily diary and marked 13 different Covid symptoms as being absent, mild, moderate or severe. Among the 108 people whose symptoms had improved without antiviral treatment, and had completely disappeared for at least two consecutive days, 48 people (44 percent of those who recovered) noted that symptoms flared up again at various times during four weeks of follow-up.

“The good news is that nobody who had their symptoms return needed to go to the hospital or died or even got severe symptoms,” Dr. Smith said. Eighty-five percent of those who had a rebound reported that their symptoms were mild; 15 percent had at least one moderate symptom.

The most common complaints during a symptom rebound were coughing, feeling fatigued and having a headache. These were all similar to symptoms people reported at the start of the study, in the active phase of their infection, Dr. Smith said.

One of the limitations of the study, however, is that it looked at older strains of coronavirus in people, before vaccines became available. That makes it hard to extrapolate how frequently rebound symptoms may be an issue with the current Omicron strains, especially since most people also have some immune experience with the virus at this point in the pandemic, either because of a past infection or their vaccination. Symptoms can also change with each variant, and their severity can be very subjective, said Dr. Bruce Farber, the chief of public health and epidemiology at Northwell Health in New York. Patients noted rebound symptoms that “were remarkably mild and, quite frankly, fairly unimpressive,” he said.

Why do symptoms sometimes make a comeback?

The pattern of waxing and waning symptoms occurs in several respiratory diseases, including the [common cold](#), [flu](#) and [respiratory syncytial virus](#). “People have never really paid a lot of attention to it in the past, to be honest, as long as the patient is clinically doing better,” Dr. Farber said.

Symptoms sometimes disappear and then show up again because of the body’s own immune response to infection, Dr. Farber said. While initial symptoms like a fever, cough or runny nose may be triggered by the virus itself, the body produces its own alarm signals when it senses a foreign invader. These signals come in the form of proteins that help inactivate viral RNA and tell white blood cells where to find more of the pathogen, speeding its removal from the body. At the same time, these reactions create inflammation in the body, which can give you a headache, make you feel exhausted or prolong the duration of a cough.

“I call this friendly fire,” Dr. Farber said. “The immune system is very well intentioned and 100 percent needed, but it is clearly overreactive at times, and that often causes problems.”

What do you need to know about rebound symptoms from Paxlovid?

Concerns about rebound symptoms when taking Paxlovid — and another antiviral drug called molnupiravir — appear to have reduced people’s interest in using treatments for Covid. But the new study shows that you can have a rebound with untreated Covid as well. “I hope this can help people to be less afraid of a potential rebound,” Dr. Smith said.

Paxlovid and other drugs can be lifesaving treatments for many patients with Covid, Dr. Smith said. Research has shown that they successfully reduce the risk of hospitalization and death by [88 percent](#) in unvaccinated people. In a [fact sheet for doctors prescribing Paxlovid](#), Pfizer noted that rebounds occurred in some patients receiving the treatment — and at similar rates among people who got a placebo.

There may be several potential reasons for a Paxlovid rebound. Some doctors have speculated that in addition to the likelihood of a rebound caused by the body’s own immune system, Paxlovid taken too early may prevent the immune system from adequately preparing to fight off any remaining virus once the drug tapers off. “If you’re young and healthy, and you’ve been vaccinated and boosted, then I don’t push Paxlovid on people, for the most part,” Dr. Farber said.

But experts agree that people who are sick and at high risk of developing severe Covid — including adults 65 and older, as well as those of any age with underlying health conditions like heart disease, cancer, diabetes or obesity — should seek treatment.

If you do experience a rebound after treatment, there is no evidence that you need to start another course of Paxlovid. Isolate a while longer in case you are contagious to others. And try to manage symptoms with pain and fever-reducing medicines, [home remedies](#) and time, Dr. Smith said. “I recommend staying hydrated, watching ‘The Golden Girls’ and eating chicken soup.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 US aims keep sensitive weapons in Ukraine
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/27/us/politics/weapons-aid-ukraine-russia.html
GIST	<p>Following concerns in Congress and accusations by Russia about weapons smuggling, the Biden administration released its blueprint on Thursday for ensuring that the \$17 billion in arms it has so far sent to Ukraine were making it to the battlefield — and not the black market.</p> <p>Officials said many aspects of the plans, which were put in place over the summer, were classified and could not be publicly revealed without risking the steps necessary to track weapons that the West has delivered to Ukraine since Russia invaded in February.</p> <p>A five-page document broadly outlining the program described providing additional support to Ukraine’s efforts to account for the weapons, as Kyiv has pledged to do, including training for border guards and stricter monitoring of arms and ammunition.</p> <p>However, the document said, “we recognize that the chaotic nature of combat can make this difficult.”</p> <p>The worry about weapons trafficking — whether to extremist groups, adversarial governments or Russia’s army — arose almost as soon as the United States and its European allies began to flood military support into Ukraine to repel Moscow’s invasion. Experts say it is nearly impossible to track all light weapons, including the portable shoulder-fired missiles known as Javelins.</p> <p>American officials said they were confident that high-tech missiles and launchers and other arms donated to Ukraine had reached the front lines, where commanders are using them as fast as they can be supplied. They also noted recent arrests of Russians and others who were caught trying to smuggle out assault rifles, ammunition and other weapons.</p> <p>Yet lawmakers in Congress have demanded stricter oversight. “American taxpayers deserve to know that their money is helping Ukraine beat back Russia effectively,” Senator John Kennedy, Republican of Louisiana, said in May.</p> <p>In July, the European police agency known as Europol said that the deluge of arms being sent to Ukraine “could lead to an increase in firearms and munitions trafficked into the E.U. via established smuggling routes or online platforms.”</p> <p>“This threat might even be higher once the conflict has ended,” the agency warned.</p> <p>That month, Ukraine’s defense minister, Oleksii Reznikov, told the BBC that growing fears about weapons trafficking were largely the result of a Russian disinformation campaign and that Ukraine had instituted several tracking efforts.</p> <p>But he conceded that it was possible that weapons could be smuggled out of Ukraine and into the rest of Europe and confirmed that some had been captured by Russians.</p>

A senior Biden administration official this week said the United States was aware of only one verifiable example of a weapons system being smuggled out of Ukraine since the start of the war: a [Swedish-made anti-tank grenade launcher](#) that blew up in the trunk of a car about 10 miles outside of Moscow.

Injured in the May blast was a retired Russian military officer who had just returned from eastern Ukraine, according to news media [reports of the incident](#) that were confirmed by the senior administration official.

The official spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe the Biden administration's counter-smuggling plan before it was publicly released on Thursday.

The plan looks beyond the immediate battlefield demands to what officials expect will emerge over the next year and into 2024. It also proposes additional staffing and other resources for the U.S. Embassy in Kyiv in coming years to help with oversight.

It largely focuses on portable, lethal and high-technology munitions, the senior official said. Among them, he said, are the more than [1,400 Stinger air-defense missiles and the 8,500 Javelin](#) anti-tank guided missiles that the Biden administration has provided.

Nikolai Sokov, an expert at the Vienna Center for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation and a former Russian diplomat, said that Ukraine's forces or other officials were unlikely to traffic weapons that are desperately needed on the battlefield. But he called it "impossible to track" small or light arms, including shoulder-fired missiles, during wartime chaos.

He said he knew of no cases in which larger weapons, like howitzers or multiple rocket launchers, were being smuggled off the battlefield by Ukrainians and onto the black market.

"But when conditions are not about national survival, we might see the revival of some shady kinds of schemes," Mr. Sokov said. "So after the active war fighting ends, a tracking system, a monitoring system will be even more necessary than in this moment."

The senior Biden administration official said the counter-smuggling plan was an accelerated version of oversight that has continued since Russia seized the Crimean Peninsula in 2014 and fueled a separatist insurgency in the Donbas region.

Last week, Russia claimed that as much as \$1 billion worth of Western weapons to Ukraine were being trafficked each month. On Wednesday, President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia told officials from former Soviet states that "serious challenges are posed by the black market for weapons operating in Ukraine, and cross-border criminal groups are actively involved in their smuggling to other regions."

But the senior Biden administration official said photos on social media of American-provided weapons that were purported to be for sale were another product of Russian disinformation. Mr. Sokov also said it was not surprising that Moscow "would be very interested in stirring some concerns in the West."

"Congress, depending on the election next month, might really get concerned, see it as a reason to slow down or cut the delivery of arms," Mr. Sokov said.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 Sound Transit takes over downtown tunnel
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/transportation/sound-transit-takes-ownership-of-aging-downtown-seattle-tunnel/
GIST	More than three years after buses were evicted from Seattle's distinctive transit tunnel, the 1.3-mile passage will finally become the property of Sound Transit , which promises to fix the four worn-out stations for light-rail customers.

Sound Transit's governing board voted 13-0 on Thursday, with five members absent, to take over tunnel ownership from King County Metro.

Metro is handing off the tunnel at no cost, but Sound Transit has planned a \$96 million investment for upgrades, not just for new escalators and elevators, but also to fix utility lines, broken floor and wall sections, and soiled artworks.

Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell emphasized the tunnel also needs better lighting, graffiti removal and security. Sound Transit should be transparent about the task ahead and its obligation to improve rider experience, he said.

"This is a momentous date, and I join in celebrating and supporting it," said Harrell, a member of the transit board.

Completed in 1990 at a cost of \$486 million, the Seattle tunnel initially served [specialized Italian buses](#) that cruised below downtown on electric wires, but also had retractable poles for diesel operations outside the city core. They were replaced later by hybrid diesel-electric buses that could traverse the tunnel on mainly clean battery power. Seattle made history with North America's only transit tunnel that combined both buses and trains from 2009 to 2019, except for Pittsburgh's stationless [Mount Washington Transit Tunnel](#).

About [570 daily bus trips](#) moved up to Seattle streets in March 2019, displaced by [convention center construction](#) and growing frequency and [ridership on light rail](#). Bus riders often faced slower trips in surface traffic. Since then, the busy Metro Route 41 to Northgate has been replaced by a light-rail extension last October, giving thousands of riders a quick passage to Northgate and the University District.

King County's original construction debt is paid off with help from \$87 million in Sound Transit payments — another reason Thursday's deal is for zero dollars.

The two agencies also agreed to earmark up to \$50 million of tunnel advertising revenue to fund low-income fare discounts.

Metro will continue to operate and maintain the trains as a Sound Transit contractor.

For the past few years, travelers constantly complained about broken escalators and elevators, which King County and Sound Transit failed to replace in the 2010s as they neared the end of a 30-year lifespan. Sound Transit took over the conveyances in 2021 with a new maintenance contractor, Schindler.

Their goal is to keep the old parts at least 70% reliable, until all 58 vertical conveyances are replaced. That could take years, with the [first eight scheduled](#) at International District/Chinatown Station during winter 2023-24. As of September, the downtown escalators were 71% working, and elevators 85% working, the [agency's tracker says](#).

Sound Transit can't just fasten new components, but must also reengineer the surrounding tunnel area and deliver parts into areas where space can be tight, said Suraj Shetty, executive director of operations.

Downtown's Westlake Station, formerly the busiest stop on the 1 Line, served about 9,600 daily passengers boarding trains as of August, down from its late-2010s peak near 15,000. Overall, 1 Line use is around 80,000 per day and gradually rebounding in 2022. In rebuilding transit ridership, the community must surmount COVID-related health worries, office closures as people work from home, and problems that range from open drug use on downtown sidewalks to a March incident when a man threw a commuting nurse [down station stairs](#).

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 Seattle's real estate outlook slips in ranking
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/seattles-real-estate-outlook-slips-in-national-ranking/

GIST	<p>Seattle's position has slipped in a key national ranking of real estate prospects looking ahead to 2023, reflecting the economic uncertainty looming over all types of development.</p> <p>The "Emerging Trends" rankings are produced each year by the nonprofit Urban Land Institute and PwC, an advisory and tax-services firm, based on a survey of more than 1,400 investors, developers, lenders and other real estate insiders across the country.</p> <p>Seattle's rankings have been a roller coaster in recent years, scoring the No. 1 spot for "overall real estate prospects" in the report looking ahead to 2018, then dropping to No. 16, climbing back to No. 10 and then tumbling to No. 34 after the pandemic hit in 2020. Last year, the city returned to higher rankings at No. 9.</p> <p>In the latest report, looking to next year, Seattle dropped out of the Top 10 and ranked 17th.</p> <p>Top-ranked cities were mostly in the South, with Nashville, Tennessee; Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas; and Atlanta comprising the top three. San Antonio, Houston, Miami and Orlando, Florida, also surged past Seattle this year.</p> <p>Other Washington markets dropped a bit in the rankings: Tacoma from No. 60 to 62 and Spokane/Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, from No. 73 to 78.</p> <p>The developers and investors surveyed considered a number of market factors, from single-family home prices to the office market, demand for industrial space and more.</p> <p>Across the country, fewer commercial real estate deals are taking place, and profit margins are narrowing. Single-family home sales and construction are slowing. Rents, which have shot up over the last year, are beginning to level off. Demand for office space is confused, with fewer employees physically in the office but some companies holding on to that space as they wait and see, a dynamic that can't last forever, the report notes.</p> <p>Commercial real estate investment surged last year, but those surveyed expect less lending and investing next year.</p> <p>The report calls Seattle an "establishment" market that, along with others like Los Angeles, Chicago and San Jose, California, continues "to attract a disproportionate share of investment dollars."</p> <p>But ratings for those markets are "volatile" because of "the changing fortunes of the tech sector," the report said.</p> <p>Tech companies have slowed their hiring in recent months, with Amazon partially freezing corporate hiring. Microsoft reduced hiring earlier this year and announced it would lay off about 1,000 employees last week.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/27 Rep. Jayapal draws ire over Ukraine letter
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/10/27/jayapal-ukraine-letter/
GIST	<p>When Russian President Vladimir Putin this summer began escalating his threat of using nuclear weapons over the United States' aid to Ukraine, the Congressional Progressive Caucus wanted to respond.</p> <p>A two-page letter to President Biden, drafted in July, was meant to reaffirm House liberals' belief that diplomatic engagement is critical at such points of escalation to avoid nuclear war. It was not meant to push the administration to take a radically different approach to foreign policy, according to several people familiar with the letter who, like others who spoke to The Washington Post, did so on the condition of anonymity to discuss private conversations.</p>

But the release of the letter was delayed for months, [becoming public Monday](#) and, in turn, shocking the signatories and many in the House Democratic caucus. Absent the critical timing of Putin's nuclear remarks, co-signers were bombarded with questions from their Democratic colleagues and constituents about why they signed on to a letter that gave the impression liberals were advocating isolationism and direct negotiations with an authoritarian leader.

At the center of the frustration is Rep. Pramila Jayapal (D-Wash.), chairwoman of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, who was instrumental in coordinating the letter and its release, people familiar with the letter told The Post. The lack of clarity around the timing of its release particularly irked several co-signers, who said Jayapal should have communicated that and not doing so was unbecoming of a leader.

The fierce backlash led the CPC to [rescind the letter](#) Tuesday afternoon, with Jayapal accepting "responsibility for this" but blaming staffers for releasing it "without vetting." Several Democrats, however, privately criticized Jayapal for blaming staff, noting she provided The Post with a statement about the letter upon its release Monday.

The CPC and Jayapal's office have since declined several requests to comment on how the letter was drafted and why it was released Monday.

The internal uproar has brought back to the surface persistent tensions within the House Democratic caucus at a time when the party is fighting to keep their majority. The letter, several lawmakers and aides said, could undercut Democrats' argument just two weeks before Election Day that they are the party that would continue to support Ukraine, unlike House Republicans, who have signaled they [would cut back aid](#) if they gain the majority.

It has also brought into question Jayapal's leadership ability as she weighs [launching a bid challenging](#) Rep. Katherine M. Clark (D-Mass.) if the second position in leadership opens up next term.

Dismay and deep frustration was expressed by several lawmakers and aides across the caucus Wednesday, but surprise at Jayapal's actions were not. Several said Jayapal's ambition to ascend to higher leadership has often driven her to act unilaterally and insert herself into issues and conversations.

Some House Democrats raised an eyebrow when they saw The Post's [reporting on the letter](#) Monday, which included a fresh statement from Jayapal. Leadership was also unaware of the letter, according to aides, which came as Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) met with leaders in Croatia to reassure them the United States would continue to back the Ukrainians.

While liberals often come to Jayapal's defense for her ability to inject herself into key negotiations, some within the caucus she leads have all but unendorsed her bid for broader leadership. Though no one is seeking to challenge her as CPC chair, several liberals noted the debacle has left some questioning whether they would even support her to stay in that role.

"She can kiss her chances of leadership goodbye," one person familiar with the effort regarding the letter said.

Those who support Jayapal and some frustrated with the situation acknowledged that she has worked to expand the CPC's influence and bridge relationships with the White House so the liberals can be an active [part of ongoing deliberations](#). In campaign calls to colleagues, Jayapal has touted the role she has played as CPC chairwoman to pass critical pieces of legislation, including the bipartisan infrastructure law and pushing the [administration to sign](#) executive orders on liberal priorities.

It's a pitch that has irritated moderates who often found themselves at the opposite end of debates during the legislative process. Liberals objected to passing the bipartisan infrastructure bill last year unless the \$3.5 trillion social spending package known as Build Back Better was attached, warning that

unlinking it would prevent passage of Biden's priority legislation. The tensions created headaches for the party that had a narrow majority to enact bills in Congress.

Moderates, including the most vulnerable members, were often frustrated by liberal demands that they believe stalled passage of legislation they wanted to tout on the campaign trail. It's an underlying tension that has remained consistent since Democrats regained the House majority in 2018.

The immediate worry by some members Wednesday was that their own colleagues were undermining Democrats' united front in supporting Ukraine as House Republicans begin to argue that the United States should [no longer send fiscal aid](#) to help the country defeat Putin. The letter Monday argued for the administration to look at other avenues alongside aiding Ukraine fiscally to prevent a never-ending war. But the statement withdrawing the letter acknowledged the language was "being conflated" with what Republicans have discussed. "Nothing could be further from the truth," the statement said.

"We need to stay focused as Democrats to win our elections and hold our majority, and as a nation, Democrats and Republicans must make sure we support the Ukrainians," said Rep. Bradley Schneider (D-Ill.), who chairs the moderate New Democrat Coalition Action Fund. "This is an attack on democracy globally, and that's why we definitely have a stake here. We all should be concerned about the threat of escalation. We also can't let Putin bully us."

Without the backdrop of escalated talks of nuclear warfare, co-signers — some of whom serve on foreign relations-related committees — publicly noted that they would not have signed onto the letter today. Rep. Sara Jacobs (D-Calif.) [tweeted](#), "Timing in diplomacy is everything." Rep. Mark Takano (D-Calif.), who chairs the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, put out a statement clarifying that he has "remained steadfast in support of the Ukrainian people" and Biden's leadership.

The unilateral actions by the CPC was unsurprising to some front-line Democrats, the most vulnerable swing-district members working to keep their seats and the House majority. They believe they [fight different battles](#) than safe-seat Democrats like Jayapal who, they say, can think about other priorities without risking electoral consequences from their constituents.

In an interview earlier this month, Rep. Elissa Slotkin (D-Mich.) noted that her "peers from easy districts are so sensitive" to criticism when trying to strike a compromise.

"One criticism from an activist group or someone loud on Twitter, they're like, 'Elissa, we have to change this.' I'm like, 'What happened?' And they're like, 'My activists are really getting upset.' I'm like, 'Okay, but your activists are not the average person.' And they're like, 'No, no, no. It's really important,' " she recalled in a sentiment other front-line Democrats have also expressed.

One person close to the progressive caucus said activist groups can often pressure or influence the caucus, especially on foreign policy. It remains unclear whether outside groups influenced the content of the letter or the timing of its release, but several endorsed the letter, including the Quincy Institute, which was one of several outside organizations that endorsed and advocated for the letter after seeing an early version.

"The CPC is often outside the norm on foreign policy and that's a fine place to be during the Trump administration, but not when there's a big war and in October of a midterm in a Democratic administration," the person said.

Though questions around the timing of the letter's release remain, some lawmakers and aides believe the crux of it stands, noting Biden [warned earlier this month](#) the "prospect of Armageddon" is the highest since the Cuban missile crisis because of Putin's remarks. The letter notes Biden himself said there will have to "be a negotiated settlement" to end the war.

One person who has formed a close relationship with Jayapal over the years is White House Chief of Staff Ron Klain, who did not come to her defense Wednesday.

	<p>Still, many Democrats and even some Biden administration officials did not find the letter highly objectionable. They noted that the progressives stressed their support of Biden and his work maintaining support domestically and abroad for the war and did not threaten to cut off funding, but thought the letter's rollout was clumsy and ill-timed.</p> <p>The White House did not think the letter was a big deal when officials first received it, a White House aide said, noting that the lawmakers went to great pains to praise Biden's approach to Ukraine and expressed support for economic and military packages.</p> <p>Officials did not view it as a major break from Biden's policy but made clear they would not change their approach because of the letter. White House spokesman John Kirby said the United States would not have conversations with Russia without Ukrainian leadership being represented. Kirby also noted Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has said he does not think it is the time to begin a negotiated settlement with Putin and that U.S. officials respect his opinion.</p> <p>"I thought the letter was pretty harmless," Sen. Chris Murphy (D-Conn.) said. "But my only worry was that it was going to create the impression that there was a big group of Democrats pushing for immediate diplomacy and that obviously is not the case given that many of the signers of the letter did not seem to understand what the implications of it would be."</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/27 WHO: tuberculosis cases rise
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/who-tuberculosis-cases-rise-for-the-first-time-in-years/
GIST	<p>GENEVA (AP) — The number of people infected with tuberculosis, including the kind resistant to drugs, rose globally for the first time in years, according to a report Thursday by the World Health Organization.</p> <p>The U.N. health agency said more than 10 million people worldwide were sickened by tuberculosis in 2021, a 4.5% rise from the year before. About 1.6 million people died, it said. WHO said about 450,000 cases involved people infected with drug-resistant TB, 3% more than in 2020.</p> <p>Dr. Mel Spigelman, president of the non-profit TB Alliance, said more than a decade of progress was lost when COVID-19 emerged in 2020.</p> <p>"Despite gains in areas like preventative therapy, we are still behind in just about every pledge and goal regarding TB," Spigelman said.</p> <p>WHO also blamed COVID-19 for much of the rise in TB, saying the pandemic "continues to have a damaging impact on access to TB diagnosis and treatment." It said progress made before 2019 has since "slowed, stalled or reversed."</p> <p>With fewer people being diagnosed with the highly infectious disease, more patients unknowingly spread tuberculosis to others in outbreaks that may not have been spotted in countries with weak health systems.</p> <p>WHO reported that the number of people newly identified with TB fell from 7 million in 2019 to 5.8 million in 2020.</p> <p>WHO also said COVID-19 restrictions, including lockdowns and physical distancing protocols, also hampered TB treatment services and may have prompted some people to skip going to health facilities for fear of catching coronavirus. Officials added that the downturn in the global economy was also a factor, saying that about half of all TB patients and their families face "catastrophic total costs" due to their treatment. WHO called for more countries to cover all TB diagnosis and treatment expenses.</p>

After COVID-19, TB is the world's deadliest infectious disease. It is caused by bacteria that typically affects the lungs. The germs are mostly spread from person to person in the air, such as when an infected individual coughs or sneezes.

TB mostly affects adults, particularly those who are malnourished or have other conditions like HIV; more than 95% of cases are in developing countries.

According to the WHO report, only one in three people with drug-resistant TB are receiving treatment.

"Drug-resistant TB is curable, but alarmingly, cases are on the rise for the first time in years," said Dr. Hannah Spencer, who is with Doctors Without Borders in South Africa. "It's urgent that shorter, safer and more effective treatments are scaled up now."

Spencer called for lowering the prices of TB treatment so a complete treatment course costs no more than \$500.

WHO also said ongoing conflicts in eastern Europe, Africa and the Middle East have worsened the options for patients seeking TB diagnosis and treatment.

Ukraine had one of the world's worst TB epidemics even before Russia invaded the country in February. Health experts fear the inability of patients to get treated could fuel the rise of more drug-resistant TB across the region.

While TB patients displaced by the war can seek care in Ukraine, the country has seen a shortage of key medicines and authorities face challenges in keeping track of patients.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 Seattle mayor 'One Seattle Graffiti Plan'
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/seattle/seattle-mayor-seattle-graffiti-plan/281-39b02be4-d1c1-444b-b927-72ad94efd131
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell announced his plan to address what he's calling a surge in graffiti seen in the city.</p> <p>The "One Seattle Graffiti Plan" is intended to help beautify the city, as well as increase enforcement. It would also increase space for public art through the "Many Hands Art Initiative."</p> <p>"We have an opportunity to envision a more beautiful Seattle – with murals and canvasses that reflect our values of creativity, inclusion, and forward-thinking," Harrell said. "Not only does tagging and graffiti detract from the vibrancy of our city, there are tangible impacts on communities targeted by hate speech, small business owners whose shops are defaced, and residents who rely on City signage for information and guidance.</p> <p>"Incidents of graffiti have dramatically increased throughout the pandemic, and progress requires a One Seattle approach, where we work together to advance proven solutions, reduce silos, and tap into our greatest resource – our community."</p> <p>According to the city, reports of graffiti have increased by more than 50% since 2019, including nearly 20,000 reports and tagging in 2021.</p> <p>The "One Seattle Graffiti Plan" will initially rely on \$944,000 of the mayor's proposed budget and be used for improved abatement efforts, supporting property owners, and improving volunteer opportunities.</p> <p>Harrell's plan includes six main strategies:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing best practices to increase abatement by increasing staffing and resources for Seattle Public Utilities' Graffiti Rangers and improving interdepartmental coordination. • Increased assistance to reduce graffiti by offering abatement services at low or no cost to property owners. • Provide up to 1,000 graffiti abatement kits and training to businesses. • Work with the City Attorney's Office and Seattle police to increase enforcement, which includes "larger penalties" for the "most prolific taggers." • Engage with artists, businesses and volunteers to find more spaces for public art. • Continue to collaborate with the Washington State Department of Transportation to prioritize cleanup along the right of ways. <p>In a statement, the Downtown Seattle Association said the Metropolitan Improvement District's Clean Team cleans a 285-square block area downtown seven days a week in an effort to "create a healthy, vibrant downtown for all." The Association said it supports Harrell's plan.</p> <p>"In the last two years alone, the Clean Team has removed more than 57,000 graffiti tags and stickers from public and private structures," the statement continues. "Our recent investment in additional cleaning resources will help enhance this team's ability to ensure a welcoming environment. This work is crucial for downtown's recovery."</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	10/27 Court: bikini baristas ban unconstitutional
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/everett-city-ordinance-banning-bikini-baristas-deemed-unconstitutional/QVP4IAPB2VBFNLGNB6RSUB4CVY/
GIST	<p>An Everett city ordinance has now been deemed unconstitutional after a ruling in the District Court. For nearly five years, a legal battle has played out between the City of Everett and Jovanna Edge. Edge is the owner of several Snohomish County coffeeshops with "bikini baristas."</p> <p>Edge sued the city council after they unanimously passed a city ordinance that created a dress code for specific businesses. It banned attire like swimsuits and lingerie.</p> <p>In court filings, the city claimed the coffee stands had a history of prostitution, sexual assault, and exploitation – and that prompted the ban. The city then had police officers hand out fliers with suggested appropriate attire that included tank tops and shorts.</p> <p>"Police would come through in their cruisers and they would hand us a piece of paper that had rules what we were allowed and not allowed to wear," explains Courtney, a local barista. "And if it were anything other than that, we'd be charged with lewd conduct. Which is insane!"</p> <p>Edge, along with seven baristas sued to block the ban stating the ordinance was vague, unlawfully targeted women, and denied them the ability to communicate through their attire.</p> <p>"We're like, 'this is going to destroy our business,' so we found an attorney," says Edge.</p> <p>In the fall of 2017, a judge ordered an injunction. This month, another judge provided clarity for Edge and Everett.</p> <p>In his ruling, US District Judge Ricardo Martinez dismissed that argument that the ordinance violated freedom of speech. However, he outlined the issue of gender discrimination that the ordinance created, writing, "The Dress Code Ordinance prohibits clothing typically worn by women rather than men,</p>

including mid-riff and scoop-back shirts, as well as bikinis...There is evidence in the record that the bikini barista profession, clearly a target of the Ordinance, is entirely or almost entirely female. It is difficult to imagine how this Ordinance would be equally applied to men and women in practice.”

Despite the ruling going in her favor, Edge is frustrated.

“The city of Everett has chosen to waste five years, all of the fees for their attorneys, all of the fees for my attorneys, all over putting young women – who have children – out of work,” says Edge.

In a written statement to KIRO 7, Julio Cortez, Everett’s Communication Manager writes, “The City has been engaged in this litigation since 2017 because of the number of young women who reported being forced to perform sexual acts in order to keep their jobs at certain coffee stands. The goal has always been to protect these women from the owners of the stands who were, through intimidation and financial pressure, forcing these young women to perform illegal acts with customers. We are disappointed with the Court’s decision and as we look into next steps, we hope that these young women are protected and respected.”

Cortez tells KIRO 7 that the City of Everett has spent \$372,298 defending the ordinance in this case.

Edge claims she’s spent close to two million dollars in legal fees.

“I think it’s worth it because it’s just the satisfaction of knowing that the little guy can stand up to the City of Everett with the deep pocket. And you still have your constitutional rights,” says Edge.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 Mortgage rise: 30yr fixed-rate to 7.08%
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/27/business/us-mortgage-rates.html
GIST	<p>Mortgage rates barreled past the 7 percent mark on Thursday to their highest level since 2002, as the Federal Reserve’s aggressive interest rate increases, meant to combat inflation, continued to seep through the economy and worry markets.</p> <p>Rates on 30-year fixed-rate mortgages — the most popular kind among home buyers in the United States — rose to 7.08 percent, up from 6.94 per percent last week and 3.14 percent from this time last year, according to the latest weekly survey by Freddie Mac. Rates had already surpassed 7 percent according to other trackers, but this is the first time that the closely watched Freddie Mac survey surpassed that level in two decades.</p> <p>“As inflation endures, consumers are seeing higher costs at every turn, causing further declines in consumer confidence this month,” Sam Khater, the chief economist at Freddie Mac, said in a statement. “In fact, many potential home buyers are choosing to wait and see where the housing market will end up, pushing demand and home prices further downward.”</p> <p>Even though mortgage rates have rocketed higher over a short period, they are still slightly below their long-term average of about 7.8 percent, according to Freddie Mac, which began tracking borrowing costs in 1971. In the early 1980s, rates stretched well into the double digits, exceeding 18 percent in 1981.</p> <p>Mortgage rates typically track the 10-year Treasury note, which is influenced by a variety of factors, including the Fed’s efforts to rein in inflation and growing concerns among investors that a recession is imminent. Stress in the underlying market for bonds backed by household mortgages — which factors into the price consumers pay — has also pushed rates higher. The U.S. central bank is expected to interest raise rates by another 0.75 percentage points at its meeting next month.</p> <p>The rapid rise in borrowing costs has already taken a toll on the housing market, shutting out many would-be home buyers. Existing home sales in September fell nearly 24 percent from the year prior, according to the National Association of Realtors.</p>

	<p>At the same time, the national median mortgage payment in September rose to \$1,941, up 5.5 percent from August, according to a report by the Mortgage Bankers Association, which was also released on Thursday. The median payment has jumped 40 percent, or \$558, from the start of the year.</p> <p>“With mortgage rates continuing to rise, the purchasing power of buyers is shrinking,” Edward Seiler, the associate vice president of housing economics at the bankers association, said in a statement. The median loan amount in September was \$305,550, down from the February peak of \$340,000, its highest point since the inception of the association’s index in July 2009.</p> <p>The volume of mortgage locks in September — that is, when applicants lock in a particular rate — fell nearly 60 percent from the same month last year, according to Black Knight, a data firm that tracks the mortgage market. Locks on mortgages for home purchases were down nearly 30 percent, while refinancing activity was 93 percent lower.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	10/27 Putin denies nuclear response preparations
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/10/27/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#putins-remarks-seem-to-be-aimed-at-conservatives-in-the-us-and-europe
GIST	<p>President Vladimir V. Putin denied that Russia was preparing to use nuclear weapons on Thursday as he reeled off a familiar litany of criticisms of a “cosmopolitan” Western elite seeking to dominate the rest of the world, using an annual foreign policy speech to try to appeal to conservatives in the United States and Europe.</p> <p>“We have no need to do this,” Mr. Putin said. “There’s no sense for us, neither political nor military.”</p> <p>It was unclear if Mr. Putin’s comment was the last word on Moscow’s plans. From the start of the war, Russian officials’ comments have presented a confusing mix of truths, half-truths and outright falsehoods. Officials insisted in February, for instance, that Russia had no intention of invading Ukraine just before Russian troops crossed the border.</p> <p>During his speech, Mr. Putin maintained that Russia did not fundamentally see itself as an “enemy of the West.” Rather, he said — as he has before — that it was “Western elites” that he was fighting, ones who were trying to impose their “pretty strange” values on everyone else.</p> <p>“There are at least two Wests,” Mr. Putin said in his speech at the plenary session in Moscow of an annual foreign policy conference. One, he said, was the West of “traditional, mainly Christian values,” which Russia was close to.</p> <p>“There’s another West — aggressive, cosmopolitan, neocolonial, acting as the weapon of the neoliberal elite,” he went on.</p> <p>Mr. Putin, as he often does, portrayed Russia as threatened by the possible expansion of NATO — and the values of its liberal democracies — to former states that were once part of the Soviet Union, like Ukraine.</p> <p>Ukraine and its allies in the West, however, say Russia’s invasion is an unjustified attempt to seize a sovereign country, which has been independent since the breakup of the Soviet Union. Moscow’s troops rolled into Ukraine on Feb. 24, destroying cities, killing thousands of civilians and setting off the biggest war in Europe since World War II.</p> <p>Mr. Putin did not mention the upcoming midterm elections in the United States, but his focus on “elites” was a reminder that he still hoped to build alliances with supporters of Russia in the West, and that American and European voters would eventually lose interest in supporting Ukraine’s resistance to Russia’s invasion. He said he was sure that eventually, the West would be forced to engage Russia and other world powers in talks on a future world order.</p>

“I always believed and believe in the power of common sense,” Mr. Putin said. “I am therefore convinced that sooner or later, the new centers of the multipolar world order and the West will have to start a conversation of equals.”

In a Q. and A. session after the speech, the event’s moderator, the political scientist Fyodor Lukyanov, pressed Mr. Putin on the fact that Russia’s invasion of Ukraine does not appear to have gone according to plan. And he said that there was a widespread view that Russia had “underestimated the enemy.”

“Honestly, society doesn’t understand — what’s the plan?” Mr. Lukyanov asked.

Mr. Putin brushed aside the implicit criticism, arguing that Ukraine’s fierce resistance showed why he was right to launch the invasion. The longer Russia had waited, he said, “the worse it would have been for us, the more difficult and more dangerous.”

Mr. Putin repeated Russia’s unfounded claims that Ukraine was preparing to detonate a radioactive “dirty bomb” on its territory and blame Moscow. While Mr. Putin has repeatedly hinted that Russia could resort to nuclear weapons in what he has cast as an existential conflict in Ukraine, he insisted on Thursday that it was the West that was increasing nuclear tensions.

“We are being blackmailed,” he said, claiming it was the British and other Western leaders that were threatening Russia with a nuclear attack.

President Biden and other Western leaders have said that it is Russia who has repeatedly raised the possibility of using nuclear weapons and that the unsupported claim that Ukraine is preparing a radiological bomb could be used as a pretext by the Kremlin to escalate the war.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 Kherson Russia loyalists steal crypt bones
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/10/27/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#russian-loyalists-in-kherson-abscond-with-the-remains-of-a-general-who-helped-inspire-putins-invasion
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine — As Russian forces pillage occupied Kherson and Moscow rushes in reinforcements ahead of a looming battle for the strategic southern port, the city’s Kremlin-appointed proxy rulers dispatched a team to a majestic 18th-century stone cathedral on a special mission.</p> <p>They were sent to steal the bones of Prince Grigory Alexandrovich Potemkin.</p> <p>The memory of the 18th-century commander is vivid for those in the Kremlin bent on restoring the Russian imperium. It was Potemkin who persuaded his lover, Catherine the Great, to annex Crimea in 1783. The founder of Kherson and Odesa, he sought the creation of a “New Russia,” a dominion that stretched across what is now southern Ukraine to the Black Sea, and when President Vladimir V. Putin invaded Ukraine in February with the goal of restoring part of a long-lost empire, he invoked Potemkin’s vision.</p> <p>Now, with Mr. Putin’s army having failed in its march toward Odesa and threatened with being driven from Kherson, Mr. Putin’s grand plans are in jeopardy — but the belief among Kremlin loyalists in what they view as Russia’s rightful empire still runs deep.</p> <p>So it was that a team of Kremlin loyalists descended into a crypt below a solitary white marble gravestone inside St. Catherine’s Cathedral.</p> <p>To reach Potemkin’s remains, they would have opened a trapdoor in the floor and climbed down a narrow passageway, according to people who have visited the crypt. There they would have found a simple wooden coffin on a raised dais, marked with a single cross.</p>

Under the lid of the coffin, a small black bag held Potemkin's skull and bones, carefully numbered.

The Russian-appointed head of the Kherson region, Vladimir Saldo, said that Potemkin's remains were taken to an undisclosed location east of the Dnipro River, where Russian forces may be making preparations to retreat as Ukrainian troops edge closer to the city.

"We transported to the left bank the remains of the holy prince that were in St. Catherine's Cathedral," Mr. Saldo said in an interview broadcast on Russian television. "We transported Potemkin himself."

Local Ukrainian activists confirmed that the church has been looted and that, along with the bones, statues of venerated Russian heroes have been removed.

Simon Sebag Montefiore, the author of the book "Catherine the Great and Potemkin," said in an interview that shortly after its publication in 2000, the Kremlin contacted him to say how much Mr. Putin admired his work. But Mr. Montefiore said on Thursday that Mr. Putin's reading of history was deeply flawed, and that his war has reduced to ruins Ukrainian cities such as Mariupol and Mykolaiv that Potemkin and early Russian imperialists helped to build. (The term "Potemkin village" was coined to describe an impressive facade constructed to hide an undesirable state of affairs, although Mr. Montefiore says the term was incorrectly ascribed to the prince, whose achievements in present-day Ukraine were real.)

"Potemkin would have despised Putin and everything he stands for," he said.

But the bones' importance to Russia, Mr. Montefiore added, underscored the "power of history and the power of dead bodies," especially for the Kremlin, which has built its case for war on a distorted version of history.

Kremlin loyalists have made no effort to hide the theft. Mr. Saldo said: "These were my decisions because these are my powers, my duties and responsibilities."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 Kremlin propaganda shifts: terrorism battle
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/10/27/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#the-kremlins-intensified-propaganda-against-ukraine-aims-at-the-russian-people-us-analysts-say
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — Since before the war, Russia has spread disinformation about its need to stamp out Nazism in Ukraine. But in recent days, Moscow's propaganda has shifted, arguing that it is battling terrorism and falsely accusing Ukraine of planning a dirty bomb attack as part of that narrative.</p> <p>The new propaganda, spread on social media and in the news, also includes unsupported accusations that the Ukrainian government intends to destroy a dam in its own territory, according to European and American government officials and independent researchers.</p> <p>The push is meant to shore up Russian support for the war but also to denigrate Ukraine in the West, potentially softening support for more arms shipments to Kyiv, officials and researchers say.</p> <p>"They seem to have decided on a talking point that this is a counterterrorism operation now," said Kyle Walter, who leads the U.S. investigation team at Logically, a tech start-up that helps governments and businesses counter disinformation. "Rather than framing this as something that's anti-Nazi or anti-Satanist, you now have a concerted effort to frame it as a counterterrorism operation."</p> <p>The counterterrorism narratives, according to U.S. officials, are part of a wider propaganda web, all aimed at making Russians feel more involved in the war.</p> <p>Social media posts on the possibility of a dirty bomb attack have gained traction in Russia. FilterLabs, a firm that tracks public sentiment in Russia and elsewhere, noted a surge this week in discussions about nuclear terrorism by Ukraine.</p>

HEADLINE	10/27 Ukraine moves forces closer to Belarus
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/10/27/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#ukraine-says-it-has-moved-forces-north-in-case-of-aggression-from-belarus
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine — As Russian forces continue to launch drone and missile assaults from Belarus and troop movements near Ukraine’s northern border stir concern, the Ukrainian military said on Thursday that it had increased the number of soldiers in the area.</p> <p>Brig. Gen. Oleksii Hromov, the deputy head of the army general staff’s main operations directorate, said that Kyiv had no new evidence to suggest that Belarusian or Russian forces were preparing an offensive strike force. But concern has mounted in recent days after the Kremlin dispatched thousands of soldiers to Belarus.</p> <p>Moscow used Belarus, its closest military and political ally, as a launching pad for its invasion of Ukraine, and the movement of Russian soldiers there is closely monitored by Ukraine and its Western allies.</p> <p>“There are and there will be threats,” General Hromov said at his daily briefing on Thursday. “We have already increased our grouping in the northern operational zone.”</p> <p>Military analysts say that the Kremlin may be hoping to force Ukraine to expend military resources with the threat to the north as Russian forces struggle to hold defensive lines in southern and eastern Ukraine. Ukraine does not provide details about troop movements.</p> <p>Ukraine’s government has issued broad statements in recent weeks indicating that it was aware of a threat, with the military releasing a video recently warning that “if the Belarusian army supports Russian aggression,” Kyiv would respond “with our entire arsenal of weapons.”</p> <p>But the more immediate concern for Ukrainian officials is the continuing use of Belarus as a launching pad for aerial assaults.</p> <p>Russia has deployed its troops to airfields in Belarus, General Hromov said, and this week, it used Belarusian territory to carry out 10 launches of Iranian-made drones, he said.</p> <p>The “Belarusian Gayun” project, which monitors Russian military activity on the territory of Belarus, said that some of those drones were launched from the Belarusian part of the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone, the isolated area around the Chernobyl power plant, where the meltdown of a reactor in 1986 caused the worst nuclear disaster in history.</p> <p>Because the area is closed to the public and people do not live there, the group said, there is less likelihood that the launches will be witnessed.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/27 Pentagon outlines sweeping new strategy
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/27/us/politics/biden-military-russia-china.html
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — Eight months after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and as China pushes to increase its nuclear, space and cyberforces, the Pentagon outlined a sweeping new strategy on Thursday that called for more robust deterrence at an increasingly tense moment in international security.</p> <p>The document, the National Defense Strategy, which also includes reviews of the U.S. nuclear arsenal and missile defenses, has been circulating for months in classified form on Capitol Hill. The unclassified version published on Thursday is devoid of much specificity about how the Pentagon will shift its weapons and personnel to fit a new era of heightened superpower competition.</p>

The last national defense strategy, published in 2018 by the Trump administration, was the first since the end of the Cold War to refocus U.S. defenses on what it called the twin “revisionist” powers of China and Russia. President Biden’s document builds on that theme but distinguishes between describing China as a “pacing” technological and military challenger, and Russia as an “acute” threat but a declining power.

It prioritizes threats to the country, maps out the military’s response in broad terms and guides Pentagon policy and budget decisions on a range of issues, such as what weapons to develop and the shape of the armed forces.

But its contrast to the last document issued by a Democratic president, Barack Obama, is stark. Mr. Obama’s strategy — issued with Mr. Biden, who was the vice president at the time — had ambitions for drastically diminishing the role of nuclear weapons in U.S. defenses and described shared efforts with China and Russia to contain North Korea and dissuade Iran from building nuclear weapons.

The new document describes a Russia armed with 2,000 tactical nuclear weapons and not bound by any treaty that limits the number, raising “the possibility it would use these forces to try to win a war on its periphery or avoid defeat if it was in danger of losing a conventional war.”

That is exactly what President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia has threatened.

The document also describes an effort by China to rapidly expand its nuclear arsenal to about 1,000 strategic weapons in coming years. “The current and growing salience of nuclear weapons in the strategies and forces of our competitors heightens the risks,” it says.

Threats from Iran, North Korea and terrorist groups like Al Qaeda and the Islamic State persist — and new challenges, like global climate change, are emerging. But the strategy document focuses heavily on China and Russia.

“The P.R.C. and Russia now pose more dangerous challenges to safety and security at home, even as terrorist threats persist,” the document said, using the abbreviation for the People’s Republic of China. It noted that both rivals have deployed space weapons that could disrupt GPS and other “space-based capabilities that support military power and daily civilian life.”

The Pentagon sent a classified version of the defense strategy to Congress in March; at that time it also released a bare-bones, [two-page fact sheet](#) that summarized the document’s contents. The release on Thursday of the unclassified version, running nearly 80 pages, was delayed until the White House made public its overarching [national security strategy](#) this month.

In that document, Mr. Biden made clear that over the long term he was more worried about China’s moves to “layer authoritarian governance with a revisionist foreign policy” than he was about a declining, battered Russia.

The Pentagon document cited several new challenges to strategic stability, including hypersonic weapons, advanced chemical and biological weapons, and new and emerging warheads and delivery systems for conventional arms and tactical nuclear weapons.

That threat became more evident in the past several weeks amid signs that Mr. Putin’s commanders may be preparing the ground for a sharp escalation in the war in Ukraine. Mr. Putin has threatened to use tactical nuclear weapons.

While U.S. officials said that there was no change in Russia’s nuclear posture, and that they believed no decision had been made to use a tactical nuclear weapon, they made clear that a move in that direction was their central concern.

The concerns reflect what the defense strategy calls “the acute threat posed by Russia, demonstrated most recently by Russia’s unprovoked further invasion of Ukraine.”

In response, the document said, “The department will focus on deterring Russian attacks on the United States, NATO members and other allies, reinforcing our ironclad treaty commitments, to include conventional aggression that has the potential to escalate to nuclear employment of any scale.”

The Pentagon has already taken several steps to bolster its deterrence in Europe. The United States now has just over 100,000 troops in the continent, up more than 20,000 forces since before the Ukraine war started in February.

Mr. Biden announced in June that the United States would establish a permanent military base in Poland. It is the first time the country has done so anywhere on NATO’s eastern flank, which until now has had only a rotating troop presence.

The Pentagon will also maintain an additional rotational Army brigade in Romania, increase rotational troop deployments in the Baltic countries, deploy two squadrons of F-35 aircraft to Britain, station additional air defense units in Germany and Italy, and seek to increase the number of destroyers stationed in Spain.

If Russia was the Pentagon’s immediate security challenge, China was its long-term concern, or “pacing challenge,” the strategy document said.

“The most comprehensive and serious challenge to U.S. national security is the P.R.C.’s coercive and increasingly aggressive endeavor to refashion the Indo-Pacific region and the international system to suit its interests and authoritarian preferences,” the document said, criticizing China for its “increasingly provocative rhetoric and coercive activity towards Taiwan.”

To counter China’s influence, the document said that the Pentagon would continue to build up basing and coordinate with the State Department to expand U.S. access in the region.

[Return to Top](#)

Click on link to view “Fact Sheet: 2022 National Defense Strategy”
<https://media.defense.gov/2022/Mar/28/2002964702/-1/-1/1/ND5-FACT-SHEET.PDF>

HEADLINE	10/26 Pandemic, aftershocks reshape downtown
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/10/26/us/us-cities-downtown-chicago-seattle.html
GIST	<p>Downtown: Hartford, Conn. Chicago Lexington, Ky. Seattle Peoria, Ariz. Mountain View, Ark. Salt Lake City Nampa, Idaho Washington, D.C. Austin, Texas</p> <p>THE DOWNTOWN HAS long been the beating heart of many American cities. Jumbles of offices, apartments, theaters and restaurants are braided together by overlapping cultures and histories, and life pulses to the beats of traffic, construction and crowds.</p> <p>America’s downtowns faced hard times long before the coronavirus pandemic — troubles brought on by suburban flight, economic dislocation and freeway-construction projects that gutted neighborhoods, among other things. But the blast waves of Covid posed a threat that was new, and even existential, for places where density is part of the DNA. The virus upended where we work and live and play, and confronted cities with rising crime, crisis-level housing shortages and racial and class inequities that raise the question of who it is, exactly, that downtowns are meant to serve.</p>

Reporters and photographers from The New York Times visited 10 cities across the country to examine how the pandemic and its aftershocks have tested and reshaped America's downtowns.

While some downtown areas remain empty and are struggling to bring back workers and tourists at prepandemic levels, many say they have come back even stronger and more resilient — drawing in tourists and new residents, even as many office workers stay home. While there's no simple answer for why some places have rebounded while others limp along, their experiences reveal the challenges and possibilities that lie ahead for the country's cities and towns.

Hartford, Conn.

AT MIDDAY ON A MONDAY in August, downtown Hartford was desolate. A scattering of workers ate lunch in Constitution Plaza, the heart of the city's business district. Elevated walkways were eerily quiet. Buses slipped through empty streets.

The pandemic has hollowed out Connecticut's capital, a city of 120,000 about halfway between New York and Boston. The major companies that once secured Hartford's claim to be the "insurance capital of the world" have drastically reduced their footprints downtown, as employees opt for remote work. In the past year alone, Travelers Insurance, UnitedHealthcare, Prudential Financial and others have relinquished hundreds of thousands of square feet of downtown office space.

"I worry about it every day," said David Griggs, chief executive of the MetroHartford Alliance, the region's chamber of commerce.

Hartford has long been defined by the rhythms of its office workers, with a reputation as a place that rolled up the sidewalks at 5 p.m. Before Covid-19 hit, downtown streets would be busy with tens of thousands of workers in the mornings, at lunchtime and around happy hour. Now, though, with hybrid work schedules at many companies, "we're not seeing that same influx of corporate workers," said Jordan Polon, executive director of the Hartford Business Improvement District.

As remote work cuts off a full-scale revival of the city's business district, local leaders and developers are hoping that deeper investments in residential life and cultural attractions downtown will help fill the void. The pandemic has shown that the city needs to be "more residential-focused and less dependent on the office," said Michael Seidenfeld, chief operating officer at Shelbourne, a commercial landlord with a major stake in the downtown area.

That transition is slowly underway. A \$50 million luxury residential development downtown has already attracted tenants, and hundreds more units are scheduled to become available in the area over the coming years. Free events on weekends and in off-hours have begun to lure people back downtown.

One Saturday toward the end of the summer, a dragon boat festival featuring Thai and Vietnamese food drew Jared Carter, 33, to the banks of the Connecticut River.

Hartford is slower and quieter than New York or Boston, he and his friends agreed. But the city, whose population is predominantly Black and Latino, has a diversity that is rare in New England. And there is an ease to life in Hartford, they said, with good breweries and live music on the weekends.

"It's been trying to find its own identity for a long time," Mr. Carter said of the city. "But I think it's slowly coming together."

A few blocks away on Pratt Street, a D.J. blasted Earth, Wind & Fire as children twirled hula hoops. Storefronts that had sat vacant for years were plastered with the banners of soon-to-arrive occupants: a cocktail lounge, a tattoo-and-coffee shop, a sports bar. A new bakery, Bloom Bake Shop, was primed to open in a spacious storefront, supported by funding from the American Rescue Plan Act.

Rory Gale, the owner of Hartford Prints!, a stationery store on the block, said she hoped the city would finally capitalize on its potential.

“There’s always this great momentum, and then a decline, and then great momentum,” she said. “We’re always almost getting there.”

Many longtime residents say they still feel the sting of what the city has lost, not just during the pandemic but over the decades before it. Waiting for the first pitch of a minor-league baseball game at Dunkin’ Donuts Park, the city’s ballpark, Abraham Carrasquillo, 51, recalled the long-dead downtown stores where he used to buy shoes and Christmas presents.

“There’s no retail out here anymore,” he said. “Just the restaurants trying to survive.”

But it was a warm summer night, and to his childhood friend Jose Mercado, 50, there was still plenty to love about the city. It was Roberto Clemente Day at the ballpark, a time to reconnect. In the outfield, the American and Puerto Rican flags were unfurled side by side.

“You can see all the way around,” Mr. Mercado said with a smile. “Any seat is good.”

Chicago

MAURO BRUNO, AN OWNER of Avanti, an Italian cafe in downtown Chicago, stood in his restaurant’s dining room and pointed to the empty space where customers used to form lines at lunchtime that stretched from the counter out to the sidewalk.

Finance guys, office workers, administrative assistants, he remembered — all in a hurry to grab a panini and get back to their desks.

“It was crazy — we used to have a rock-solid business,” Mr. Bruno said. “But if people aren’t going to work, they’re not going to lunch. I don’t think it’s ever coming back.”

In this part of the Loop, the heart of Chicago, the scene on Friday afternoons resembles that of the dark, spooky days early in the pandemic, when people rarely ventured out of their homes and office buildings were barely functioning.

Restaurants are quiet now, especially on Mondays and Fridays when working from home is most common, and Mr. Bruno said he was constantly watchful for pickpockets who prey on his few customers. Many nearby storefronts are vacant, with real estate brokers’ signs in the windows offering leases. One real estate company estimated earlier this year that one-third of Chicago’s downtown storefronts were empty.

Venture away from the corporate-office parts of the Loop, however, and Chicago starts to look closer to normal.

Along Lake Michigan and the Chicago River, the areas that are most popular with tourists are bustling with visitors, public art and street musicians. Architectural boat tours of the city are seeing the crowds return. Large trade shows and concerts in the city over the summer brought some downtown hotels their biggest month ever, according to Kimberly Bares, chief executive of the Magnificent Mile Association, a trade group representing Michigan Avenue businesses.

In Millennium Park, at the huge shiny sculpture known as the Bean, crowds jostled for a spot to take a picture with the skyline of Chicago reflected above.

Janet Agunloye, 31, a social worker who lives in the city, was there with a visiting cousin. Her usual downtown spots — restaurants, rooftop bars overlooking the river — have been full again lately, she said, after a pandemic lull when she could always get a table. “Everything is crazy here again,” Ms. Agunloye said.

Graham Thompson, a native Chicagoan and the owner of Optimo, a store that sells high-end hats manufactured on the South Side, is straddling both sides of a bifurcated downtown.

From his gleaming store in the Monadnock Building in the Loop, he has seen foot traffic in the area climb steadily, but not to pre-pandemic levels. He is optimistic that in the long run, downtown's purpose is shifting away from a focus on corporate life and more toward the arts, culture and music. He described the downtown as "depressing" during the pandemic. But "the city is so resilient," he said. "Chicago's feeling better."

Lexington, Ky.

FOR YEARS, DOWNTOWN Lexington was an afterthought to everything around it — two universities, a ring of homey residential neighborhoods and, in the rolling bluegrass hills surrounding the city, world-class horse farms. Basketball fans would go into town for University of Kentucky home games, and horse owners would gather at the few nice restaurants when the big horse sales in the area were underway. But otherwise, downtown was a stodgy precinct of banks, law offices and not much else.

That changed in the 2010's. Years of effort by civic boosters dovetailed with a nationwide rediscovery of urban living, and suddenly downtown Lexington was blooming. New bars, restaurants and coffeehouses proliferated; old bank buildings were repurposed into boutique hotels; old distilleries started making bourbon again; and developers put up glassy high-rises. There were plans for a \$300 million renovation of the city's convention center and basketball arena.

"It just seemed like, starting from 2010, every year was getting better," said Debbie Long, the owner of Dudley's on Short, a restaurant that has been a downtown mainstay for 41 years, where regulars would linger over filet mignon as the city first slept, and then boomed. "The Marriott was getting ready to open in March," Ms. Long said of the months just before the pandemic took hold. "The Breeders' Cup was coming in 2021. We were scheduled to host some regional games for the NCAA tournament."

About a week after the Marriott opened, though, the city shut down.

Lexington is more recession-proof than some other cities, because its largest employers are universities and hospitals. But still, the city was brought to an abrupt halt. Restaurants and bars were among the hardest hit businesses, and the hits came in waves.

"Either we weren't making enough money, or there was high demand and we couldn't find staff," said Dan Wu, who opened the first of what would be four Atomic Ramen locations in 2017. By the summer of 2021, they had all closed.

The big real estate developers in town had a different problem. When the pandemic hit, they had already spent millions on their projects, so they pushed ahead, if nervously. Some opened during the height of the pandemic.

"They just took the attitude of, 'You know, this can't last forever, or at least we hope it can't,'" said Harold Tate, a former leader of the city's development authority, who is now working as a project manager for local developers.

Is Lexington back to where it left off? Not completely. According to a [report by the Downtown Lexington Partnership](#), a variety of measures of the local economy — including convention attendance figures — were considerably higher in 2021 than they were in 2020 but still not quite at prepandemic levels.

You'd be hard pressed to know that, though, if you went downtown on a Friday night, even one in mid-August before the students were back in town or the horse sales were going. The streets were noisy and full, the parking valets were busy at the steakhouses, concertgoers spilled out onto the sidewalks and D.J.'s played to rooftop dance parties. The next morning, the downtown farmers' market was packed, and around the corner, people stood in a half-hour-long line to buy tickets for a flight of coffee tastings at the annual Cold Brew Festival.

The pandemic “was such a drastic hit,” said Nate Polly, who has been roasting coffee downtown for a decade. But now, he said, “from a perspective of seeing people out doing things, it’s better than 2019.”

Seattle

IN THE HEART OF SEATTLE’S retail core, a multimillion-dollar renovation has given the Pacific Place Mall an expansive atrium entranceway, with natural wood and natural light that beckon to a valuable clientele: the thousands of people who, in ordinary times, would be working at Amazon’s nearby headquarters.

But these days, the city’s tech industry remains largely in work-from-home mode, and the stores in Pacific Place — which completed its renovation in 2020 — are mostly vacant. A few shoppers ride the escalators through an eerie emptiness. Much of the sunlight harnessed by the architects now falls on painted plywood walls.

“Welcome to the great indoors,” says one of the walls, apparently oblivious to all that has transpired. Retail destinations meant to draw shoppers into major cities spent much of the pandemic struggling to survive. Now they are trying to discern whether the stark changes in downtown life are permanent, or whether the allure of downtowns will keep the retail sector on a methodical path back toward the vibrancy of their heyday.

Perhaps nowhere is that uncertainty more acute than in Amazon’s hometown, where the company and the city’s brick-and-mortar retailers have had a complicated relationship, often competing but also at times complementing one another.

At Pacific Place, many of the national retailers who were once anchor tenants have not returned. The mall’s managers have instead offered pop-up retail space for local businesses to showcase their wares and test the viability of taking a more permanent space.

On the second floor, Laurie Kearney has set up her shop, Ghost Gallery, featuring local art, wine and décor — many of the items with ghost themes — in a mall that is trying to avoid being a ghost town. The items she sells are things you can’t find on Amazon. So, too, are the experiences: In the back, where before the pandemic shoppers would try on clothing from Francesca’s, visitors can now get a tarot card reading.

Ms. Kearney’s shop used to be in the nearby Capitol Hill neighborhood of Seattle, but she seized on the opportunity to relocate into Pacific Place during the pandemic. Since then, she said, her foot traffic and business have steadily increased.

“A lot of my customers are tech folks,” she said. “They come in and want to buy art and support small businesses.”

There are other signs of hope for downtown: Demand for hotel rooms in Seattle is nearing prepandemic levels, and so are visitors, according to the Downtown Seattle Association, and more people live downtown now than in 2019. Cruise ships arriving over the summer brought tourists flooding into the waterfront, which is undergoing a sweeping renewal to better connect visitors to the Pike Place Market to the north and the city’s sports stadiums to the south.

Still, office workers are only commuting to downtown at about 40 percent of their prepandemic numbers, and many businesses and visitors express concern about safety and homelessness.

The city is experimenting with a program to subsidize small retailers who move into vacant stores downtown. One business owner in the program is Sierra Jones, who opened a shop called Inside in April. The store, a few blocks from Pacific Place, features local art, products and events.

Ms. Jones views her shop as part of an effort to rebuild what was lost in a downtown that gave her many fond memories.

“To me, personally, I believe Seattle can be what it used to be,” she said, “thriving with businesses, thriving with commerce, thriving with community events.”

Peoria, Ariz.

BEFORE COVID, RESIDENTS and business owners had big dreams for Old Town Peoria, a small, overlooked downtown in the Phoenix suburbs. In place of empty lots and shuttered buildings, they envisioned new apartments, shops and restaurants. Maybe a climbing wall or concert space. New money, energy and life.

They are still waiting.

On a 106-degree summer afternoon, Jorge Berber sat outside his family’s barber shop, marveling at how the undertow of the pandemic had never relented. The shop’s haircut numbers were still down 40 percent. The auto-parts store next door was empty now. When, Mr. Berber wondered, would Arizona’s galloping growth finally trickle into the quiet downtown that anchors Peoria, a city of 195,000 people?

“All these promises, and nothing ever happens,” Mr. Berber said. “There are a lot of businesses that didn’t survive.”

Business owners say that plans to redevelop downtown seemed to wither during the pandemic, amid turmoil between the city and a developer. As the city sprang back from pandemic shutdowns, the business owners watched spring-training tourists flock to the baseball complex and 100-table restaurants on the north side of Peoria, and lamented that their city seemed to be growing everywhere but downtown.

Peoria appeals to young families and first-time home buyers who find themselves priced out of Phoenix or Scottsdale. They settle in old bungalows, stucco ranches and new apartment complexes. There’s plenty to do, from hiking to jet-skiing and pontoon-boating on the Lake Pleasant reservoir.

There just isn’t as much to do downtown. Restaurants there hung on with help from the city, takeout menus and outdoor seating. Driftwood Coffee, a locally owned cafe that opened in 2018, survived in part by capitalizing on its to-go window. A distillery shifted focus to become an event and wedding space. But a locksmith and laundromat are no more.

Business owners say that Peoria’s residents are hungry for an excuse to return downtown. People pack the pocket parks and fill the streets whenever the city holds an art walk or a Second Saturdays party. Unlike so many Arizona commercial strips that are built around parking lots and five-lane streets, Peoria’s downtown is made for strolling, with parks and houses within walking distance.

One business that opened downtown during the pandemic is 808 Social, a Hawaiian-themed coffee shop that has found an improbable niche selling macadamia-nut iced coffees and Spam musubi in the middle of the Sonoran desert. “I never came around this area,” Sarah Ihori, a barista, said of downtown. “It’s changed a lot.”

But day to day, it is still too empty, said Lance Linderman, an owner of Driftwood Coffee.

“It hasn’t really come back,” Mr. Linderman said. “Most people never come through here. Or know about it.”

Mountain View, Ark.

IN THE CAFES AND LITTLE shops that ring the courthouse in Mountain View, Ark., residents have found it increasingly common to run into new neighbors “from off.” In the local parlance of the place, “from off” is a label for people who come from off the mountain — who, whether by luck or divine

strategy, were raised somewhere else but wound up in a small town reachable by the country highways that wind and weave through the Ozarks.

“We asked God to lead us to the land where we were supposed to be, and ended up in Mountain View,” said Roni Willson, who set off from Nebraska with her husband roughly a year ago to build a new life — “destination unknown,” as she put it.

In recent years, a couple from the Mississippi Delta has reinvigorated the formerly shuttered Inn at Mountain View, just off the town square. A couple from San Antonio opened the town’s only doughnut shop. The president of the local Folklore Society hails from Baton Rouge, La.

Downtown Mountain View, population roughly 2,800, could be defined by the blocks around the old Stone County courthouse, where the streets are dotted with a cafe serving country staples and a newer spot offering Mexican food; shops selling wooden furniture, and parks where musicians gather for impromptu jam sessions. (There are no bars, though; Stone County, like nearly half the counties in Arkansas, is dry.)

The community is not without its struggles: The economy of the area relies on tourism, and was battered by the pandemic. Festivals that were major draws, like Bean Fest and Folk Fest, went mostly dormant. But things have been springing back. On a late August weekend, hundreds of motorcycles rumbled into town for a rally. The dance hall just off the square was filling up again on weekends, with crowds inching up to about half as large as they were before the pandemic.

There are also people in Mountain View like Erwin York, who is anything but “from off.” Mr. York, 97, lives on the land where he was born. He knows in his bones the magnetism of the place. Though he lived in California for 38 years, “I always said when I retired, I’d come home,” he said — and he did, some 40 years ago.

Mountain View is not for everyone. Slowing down to the town’s pace can be a tough adjustment. “We’ve got friends who are all, ‘There’s no Chick-fil-A!’” said Kevin Goggans. He and his wife, Cheri, bought and now run the Inn at Mountain View, a bed-and-breakfast where musicians will play casually in the parlor after a show at Club Possum, and then return for homemade waffles and syrup in the morning.

“I feel like we’ve kept our charm,” one of the musicians, Pam Setser, a singer and songwriter who grew up locally, said of Mountain View after breakfast. “They’ve been trying to do more things to make it a little more charming.”

Elsewhere, she knew, the arrival of outsiders might be met with resistance and concern. But it seemed to her, she said, that many of the people “from off” whom she encountered were drawn by the soul of Mountain View and were intent on protecting it.

“They have a love and desire to be part of Mountain View,” Ms. Setser said.

Even so, some recent transplants from Texas pointed out one alteration that they would not mind: They’d love a margarita with their Mexican food.

Salt Lake City

SALT LAKE CITY’S DOWNTOWN roared back from the depths of the pandemic. As newcomers flooded into Utah over the past two years — enticed by a hot economy, a lower cost of living and the outdoors — new residential towers, food halls and whiskey bars have sprouted against the backdrop of the Wasatch mountains. The city’s downtown population is expected to double in the next two years.

But it comes at a cost: Rocsheda Wilson said the downtown resurgence was pushing out working-class people like her.

For 30 years, Salt Lake City was her affordable hometown. She lost her customer-service job after getting Covid-19, then lost her apartment. She said she and four of her children had to career from couches to

motels to transitional housing. Apartments in her old neighborhood that once rented for \$850 had been renamed, remodeled and re-rented for \$1,700. She now lives in a subsidized apartment in a suburb 45 minutes' drive south of the city.

"It was either take this and deal with the grind, or be out on the street," she said one afternoon, as she and her son Antwan, 13, walked toward the bus stop on their commute home.

Housing costs have spiraled in Mountain West downtowns during the pandemic, spurred by remote work and worsening housing shortages. Housing costs have soared in cities like Denver and Boise, Idaho, as well as in ritzy mountain towns like Park City, Utah. In Salt Lake City, the price of a typical home rose to more than \$600,000 last month, from \$425,000 at the outset of the pandemic in March 2020.

Salt Lake City has struggled to provide enough housing for the working poor and people who are chronically homeless. Downtown business owners complained to the police over the summer about security, human waste and drug activity stemming from growing numbers of homeless people who do not have adequate access to help.

Salt Lake City is spending roughly \$26 million on affordable housing projects, such as building new housing and retrofitting existing motels into apartments, and also hopes to build an \$8 million tiny-home community, Mayor Erin Mendenhall said. Advocates say the projects are welcome, but much more is needed.

And the city keeps growing. While only about 60 percent of downtown office workers have come back, tourism and nightlife have surged past prepandemic levels. A dozen downtown restaurants closed while pandemic restrictions were in force, but since then, 19 have opened. In a state where as recently as 2017, strict alcohol laws required that drinks be mixed out of sight of restaurant patrons, tipplers can now order a Utah Old Fashioned at a clubby new restaurant, Franklin Avenue, or have craft beer and tacos in the industrial Granary District.

Matt Crandall, a downtown restaurateur, said the traffic at his restaurants was running as much as 20 percent above prepandemic levels. "People are dying to get out," he said. "The city is getting bigger. It's amazing — on every street corner there are condo buildings going up."

On the eastern edge of downtown, a seven-story apartment building was rising beside Ms. Wilson and her son as they headed home. It promised to have a rooftop swimming pool and a club room. As they looked around, Ms. Wilson's son set down the heavy bag of pantry items that they were lugging to their new apartment far from downtown.

"Everything is completely changing," she said.

Nampa, Idaho

KEN FISH, A FOUR-DECADE resident of Nampa, Idaho, had not spent much time downtown in recent years. But early last month he was enticed to take his 1956 Chevy Bel Air to a downtown street festival, and when he did, he and his wife could not help but notice an unexpected vibrancy around them.

Teenagers were lining up to test their skills at ax-throwing. Toddlers were sitting down to get their faces painted. Along a sidewalk that the city had recently widened, diners filled tables at a row of restaurants. Inside a pet supply shop with a "Grand Opening" banner, dogs and humans scoped out chew toys.

"Us coming down here, we are getting to see things we probably wouldn't have even paid attention to," said Mr. Fish, 76, nodding to a packed restaurant across the street.

A canvas hanging in the office of Mayor Debbie Kling depicts Nampa's downtown more than half a century ago, its streets lined with bustling shops. But over the years, shoppers were lured away, first to a mall on the edge of town, then to a bigger mall in nearby Boise, then online to Amazon. Many of Nampa's downtown stores shut down, leaving the empty shells of turn-of-the-century brick buildings.

Before the pandemic, Nampa officials had begun a series of projects meant to recapture downtown's former vibrancy, including opening a new library. Those investments continued during the pandemic, including expanding sidewalks to support outdoor dining, which eliminated some parking spaces but helped restaurants to thrive. And the city has been hosting monthly block parties that take over downtown streets.

Those efforts are starting to pay off, drawing more businesses, consumers and investment at a time when the broader Treasure Valley region is experiencing breakneck population growth.

Lena Disney, a co-owner of the Milking Barn, a home decor retailer that began with a shop outside of town, moved into space in downtown Nampa earlier this year.

"I think people love the idea of downtown," Ms. Disney, 53, said, recalling the days when she used to bring her children downtown to events and activities.

Customers in the store on a clear September day were looking at charcuterie boards, farm-themed decor and locally made candles. Some remarked on the appeal of a downtown shop selling items that celebrate the community and Idaho.

Looking to build on their momentum, city leaders hope to push the redevelopment of more empty buildings. And the city has a new project in the works that would be taller than anything else in town: a six-story apartment building, designed for people eager to fully embrace Nampa's new downtown.

Washington, D.C.

PROXIMITY USED TO BE everything in Washington, D.C.: proximity to the seat of the federal government, to influential staff members and lobbyists, to power. That was, until the pandemic hit.

The streets that intersect in the nation's political epicenter are lined largely with government buildings and lobbyists' offices, and with the restaurants and bars that serve them. Though pandemic restrictions have ended and workers have trickled back, the area remains subdued. The food trucks that used to line Farragut Square are gone.

Gerren Price, chief executive of the DowntownDC Business Improvement District, said the city "is underperforming when it comes to the return to office."

"It's clear the future of downtown will need to be more mixed-use, and somewhat less office-dependent," he said.

A survey of 100 commercial buildings in downtown Washington conducted by Kastle Systems found they were just over 41 percent occupied, on average, over a four week-period ending in early October.

Residential neighborhoods just outside downtown are flourishing. New apartments are going up along the waterfront, and the Union Market, with its small restaurant stands and shops, is bustling. But rents have climbed in those areas, contributing to the city's housing affordability crisis.

In August, a homeless encampment in McPherson Square had more than two dozen tents scattered around the park within sight of the White House and the Department of Veterans Affairs.

When the pandemic hit, downtown Washington "became a ghost town, except for people who live on the streets," said Christy Respress, executive director of Pathways to Housing DC, which helps people experiencing homelessness in Washington. The push to isolate as a way to stem the spread of the coronavirus, she said, meant that more people chose to pitch tents in federal and local parks, rather than stay in shelters.

A block away in Franklin Park, Bill Bortz, 78, a retired tax counselor at the Treasury Department, walked with his pug Sadie, carrying an array of croissants and pastries he had picked up at two of the remaining downtown bakeries. Mr. Bortz said there had long been a division between the transient political scene and the residents whose families had lived in the city for generations.

“Washington doesn’t have a single character — it’s a more complex, nuanced place than that,” he said.

During the height of the pandemic, the city’s many museums were closed, and tours of the Capitol were suspended. The number of visitors to the city dropped to 13 million in 2020, from more than 24 million, a record, in 2019.

Tourism rebounded in 2021, with an estimated 19 million visitors to the city, and tourists can once again be found scootering across the National mall or traipsing through the Capitol behind red-jacketed tour guides.

Sitting on a newly installed swinging picnic bench in Franklin Park, Adam Toeg, from London, sipped an iced coffee and chatted with his tour group, made up of students from Europe and Australia.

Mr. Toeg, 23, talked about how impressed the group was with the grand architecture of the monuments and federal buildings. “They put a lot into it to make it like the showpiece of the United States,” he said.

Austin, Texas

ON A BALMY SEPTEMBER weeknight, Aaron Jennings Puckett, a rapper better known to fans as Lil Aaron, took the stage at Antone’s Nightclub, a music joint in the heart of downtown Austin, Texas, and egged the audience on: “I’ve got one more song for y’all,” he yelled into a microphone. “I want to see y’all go ballistic.”

Lil Aaron waved his long green locks as the thundering sounds of drums and guitars electrified the room. The crowd of mostly young people followed his every command.

The energy at Antone’s on this night illustrated why the city’s downtown continues to rebound from the depths of the pandemic.

Even after years of relentless change and progress, local people insist that the capital of Texas remains true to its mantra — “Keep Austin Weird” — and its claim to be the “live music capital of the world,” largely because iconic music venues like Stubb’s, Mohawk and Cheer Up Charlie’s refuse to cede their place in a booming downtown.

“People keep coming because they don’t want to see these places go away,” said Mallory Bellinger, a manager at Antone’s, an establishment whose blues roots date back to the mid-1970s. “We are doing really well. We are open every single night.”

The numbers behind Austin’s growth, which began to pick up pace in 2015, and was only fleetingly halted by the pandemic, tell a story of a city in the middle of a modern gold rush, even as it struggles with rising homelessness. Construction sites and cranes now seem to be permanent features of downtown Austin, whose ever-expanding skyline is starting to rival those of other big American cities.

Once known as a quiet center of Texas state government, downtown Austin has been transformed by waves of investment from many sources, but especially technology industries, with ambitious expansions by Apple, Samsung and Tesla.

“Austin is having its day now,” said Jenell Moffett, an associate vice-president at the Downtown Alliance, a nonprofit group that advocates for the vitality of downtown. “I don’t think that Austin slowed down the same way other cities slowed down.”

Though the pandemic's effects are still being felt — not every shuttered business has reopened, and concerts and other shows have yet to return to their prepandemic numbers — getting back to normal economically seems to be within reach, officials and residents said.

But downtown has become less affordable. In 2017, residential rents hovered around \$2.70 a square foot; now they are closer to \$3.40, according to data collected by the Downtown Alliance.

Michael Davis, 32, is one of many people who commutes to work downtown, traveling for a half-hour each way from his home in South Austin to the Red River Cultural District, a hub for music, art and other entertainment. "For me, living downtown is not worth it," Mr. Davis said. "South Austin is just so peaceful and quiet."

Others, like Dillon Minacci, 31, say living downtown is worth the price tag. Mr. Minacci, who moved to Austin from Philadelphia during the height of the pandemic in October 2020, said he tried a suburban neighborhood at first, but then moved downtown earlier this year in search of big-city energy.

"I'm a city kid," he said. "I'm used to being able to walk anywhere."

Rising housing costs have contributed to a surge in homelessness, with encampments appearing under roaring highway overpasses and close to state legislative buildings. Austin, which has a reputation as a liberal oasis in a conservative state, began trying to clear the encampments last year after voters approved a ban on public camping, but the city has not been able to solve its homelessness problem altogether.

Ms. Bellinger, the Antone's manager, said she would like to see the city make an extra effort to help its homeless people get on their feet, for their benefit as well as the city's.

"I do think there is a general feeling of people wanting to take care of one another here," she said. "We all want a beautiful downtown."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 Health officials urge: Covid-19 vax, flu shots
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/article267940247.html
GIST	<p>Before the end of Washington's COVID-19 state of emergency Oct. 31, state health officials said Thursday that serious health concerns, including COVID-19, remain.</p> <p>In a state Department of Health briefing, officials advised residents to take steps now, including getting vaccinated for flu and COVID-19, and stocking up on COVID-19 home tests before fall and winter gatherings begin.</p> <p>Secretary of Health Dr. Umair Shah acknowledged that statewide, "we're nowhere where things were the last two years or even last year."</p> <p>Mask requirements will remain in place statewide for health care and long-term care facilities, as well as some correctional facilities after Oct. 31. Shah said the department is "actively reviewing and determining in which situations they will continue to apply, and plan to come back in mid-November with updates."</p> <p>A troublesome trend includes the rapid rise of respiratory syncytial virus currently sweeping the state with the potential of hitting hardest certain patient populations, including infants and young children, those with compromised immunity and older seniors.</p> <p>That issue, combined with the continued staffing issues at area hospitals, is leading to extended wait times in emergency departments, notably MultiCare's Mary Bridge Children's Hospital in Tacoma and Seattle Children's Hospital.</p>

“When you add in complications by an early and severe season of highly contagious respiratory viruses, that puts an even greater strain on the system,” said the state’s chief science officer Dr. Tao Sheng Kwan-Gett.

He added, “Most pediatric sites such as Seattle Children’s Hospital and Mary Bridge Children’s Hospital are seeing record-high emergency department volumes due to RSV,” and other viruses.

Steps in protecting against RSV, much like COVID, include covering your coughs and sneezes, washing hands regularly with soap and water or using hand sanitizer, and keeping children at home when they’re ill, he noted.

Shah said the state had seen its first two lab-confirmed flu deaths for the 2022-2023 season.

While COVID cases in the state have trended down except for a slight uptick in September, few in the state have taken advantage of receiving the updated bivalent booster, which protects against severe infection from both the original COVID strain and the Omicron BA.4/BA.5 strains.

“As of Oct. 24, only 15 percent of eligible people in Washington state over the age of 12 have received their updated COVID-19 booster,” said Lacy Fehrenbach, chief of Prevention, Safety and Health with the department.

“It’s especially important for seniors,” she added, “while nearly 95 percent of Washington residents 65 and older completed their primary series (of vaccine), less than 30 percent have received the updated booster,” among those eligible.

Shah underscored not forgetting about the risk of COVID as people enter the winter months, with patients able to receive both vaccines — flu and COVID — the same day.

Vaccines also are available for monkeypox, recommended for those as soon as possible after exposure.

As of Oct. 26, there have been 621 reported cases in 22 counties in the state, led by King, Pierce and Snohomish counties.

“Epidemiology indicates that the outbreak is continuing to wane, though it is too early to be confident that it is ending,” Kwan-Gett said. “it’s likely that we will continue to see MPV cases for the foreseeable future.”

As for overcrowded hospitals, Shah was not optimistic conditions would improve in the short term.

“This is for some time going to be difficult,” he noted, emphasizing that strains on hospitals now made steps for prevention all the more valuable.

“The pandemic may be in a different phase, but we still need to take preventive measures as community members,” he said.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 Scary Halloween: candy prices rise 13.1%
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/business/article267933432.html
GIST	<p>Getting ready to trick or treat?</p> <p>Well, there might be less candy around this year as prices have risen by 13.1% from last year, according to the most recent inflation report from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.</p> <p>For a bag of candy that costs \$15, that increase will be about \$2. This jump is the largest in candy prices the CPI has ever recorded.</p>

	<p>To compare, it took nine years — from 1997 to 2006 — for candy prices to rise 13%.</p> <p>Part of the reason is because sugar and flour are more expensive. Sugar is up over 17% since last September, with supply chain disruptions and a poor beet sugar production year contributing. Flour prices rose even more at 24%.</p> <p>But despite high prices, Americans are expected to spend about \$3.1 billion on candy this season, according to the National Retail Federation.</p> <p>To combat some of the rising costs, some candy makers are keeping the costs the same.</p> <p>According to The Wall Street Journal, Hershey said last week that it hadn't raised the prices of some of its candy since June.</p> <p>Overall, Halloween shoppers should expect more tricks and fewer treats this year.</p> <p>The average household is expected to spend about \$100 on candy, costumes, decorations and related items this year.</p> <p>That amount is the second highest the National Retail Federation has ever predicted, trailing only last year's record of \$103.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	10/27 'Burn boss' arrest stokes land use tensions
SOURCE	https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/Burn-boss-arrest-inflames-Western-land-use-17539271.php
GIST	<p>SALEM, Ore. (AP) — When U.S. Forest Service personnel carried out a planned burn in a national forest in Oregon on Oct. 13, it wound up burning fencing that a local family, the Hollidays, uses to corral cattle.</p> <p>The crew returned six days later to restart the burn, but the flames then spread onto the family's ranch and resulted in the arrest of "burn boss" Rick Snodgrass.</p> <p>Repercussions of the singular incident in the remote corner of eastern Oregon have reached all the way to Washington, D.C., where Forest Service Chief Randy Moore denounced the arrest. But the ranching family is applauding Grant County Sheriff Todd McKinley's actions.</p> <p>"It was just negligence, starting a fire when it was so dry, right next to private property," said Sue Holliday, matriarch of the family.</p> <p>The incident has once again exposed tensions over land management in the West, where the federal government owns nearly half of all the land.</p> <p>In 2016, that tension resulted in the 41-day occupation by armed right-wing extremists of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in adjacent Harney County to protest the imprisonment of two ranchers, Dwight Hammond and his son Steven, who were convicted of arson for setting fires on federal land.</p> <p>In a telephone interview, Tonna Holliday, Sue's daughter, said whoever was responsible for burning up to 40 acres (16 hectares) of their property should face justice.</p> <p>"How can the Hammonds be held accountable but the United States Forest Service not be held accountable when it's the same thing?" Holliday said.</p> <p>However, the Hammonds were convicted of felony arson for intentionally setting fires on federal land, including a fire set to allegedly cover up their slaughter of a herd of deer. Snodgrass is being investigated for alleged reckless burning, a misdemeanor.</p>

The practice of mechanical thinning and planned fires in overgrown forests is credited with saving homes, for example during a 2017 wildfire near Sisters, Oregon. But some efforts have gone terribly awry, including causing the largest fire in New Mexico's history earlier this year. Several hundred homes were destroyed, livelihoods of the rural residents were lost and water supply systems were compromised.

The federal agency acknowledged in a review that it failed to consider the historic drought and unfavorable spring weather conditions as fire managers attempted to reduce flammable undergrowth in northern New Mexico.

Moore said following the review that the agency must account for its actions. This week he told Forest Service workers that he's got their backs.

"Prescribed fire is a critical tool for reducing wildfire risk, protecting communities, and improving the health and resiliency of the nation's forest and grasslands," Moore said on the Forest Service website. "I will aggressively engage to ensure our important work across the country is allowed to move forward unhampered as you carry out duties in your official capacity."

Forest Service spokesman Jon McMillan said the fencing that was burned on Oct. 13 has already been repaired.

"We regularly plan and conduct prescribed burns in areas with allotments fences and it's standard practice to fix any fence posts damaged by the burn," he said.

Over the past dozen years, prescribed fire has accounted for an average of 51% of the acreage of hazardous fuels reduction accomplished, or an average of 1.4 million acres per year, the Forest Service says.

Grant County covers 4,529 square miles (11,730 square kilometers) — four times the size of Rhode Island — and is studded with forests and mountains, blanketed by grasslands and high deserts. Only 7,200 people reside there, many tracing their Oregon roots back to wagon train days. The Hollidays and other ranchers used to drive hundreds of cattle annually through the nearby town of John Day, in scenes reminiscent of the Old West.

The Holliday ranch covers more than 6,000 acres (2,400 hectares) and has about 1,000 head of cattle. This time of year, before the snow falls, the cattle are being driven from the family's grazing allotments in the Malheur National Forest onto a large pasture holding area, and then onto the ranch.

On Oct. 19, dark gray smoke from the prescribed fire loomed over some of the cattle as they grazed in the pasture. Soon enough, the fire jumped onto the Holliday's ranch. It burned large stands of ponderosa pines that Tonna Holliday's uncle, Darrell Holliday, said he helped plant two decades ago.

Grant County District Attorney Jim Carpenter on Tuesday defended the arrest of Snodgrass, who was handcuffed and taken to the county jail before being conditionally released. Carpenter said an investigation into the case could last for weeks or even months and that once it's completed, he'll decide whether to charge Snodgrass.

The Hollidays say they want justice done.

"We're just standing up for what we believe in, and this is our land," Tonna Holliday said. "And that's really what it comes down to."

She dissociated the family from extremists like Ammon Bundy, who led the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge takeover. The Bundy family has a history of opposition to the federal government. Bundy's father had refused to pay federal cattle grazing fees in Nevada, leading to an armed standoff there in 2014.

	“The Bundys, they were extreme,” Holliday said. “They didn’t pay their grazing fees. We believe in paying off grazing fees, running our cows out there responsibly, working with our range management and doing it that way.”
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/27 Police, firefighters high Covid death rates
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/police-firefighters-job-highest-covid-death-rates-2020/story?id=92196555
GIST	<p>Police officers, firefighters and other protection service employees had the occupation with the highest death rates from COVID-19 in 2020, new federal data shows.</p> <p>The report, published Friday by the National Center for Health Statistics -- a branch of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, looked at COVID mortality during the first year of the pandemic across 46 states and New York City by profession.</p> <p>The authors only looked at Americans between ages 15 and 64 who were in the paid, civilian workforce, meaning those with unpaid jobs or who serve in the military were not included in the analysis.</p> <p>Results showed that those with protective service occupations -- including police, firefighters, fire inspectors, correctional officers, private detectives, security guards and probation officers -- had the highest rate at 60.3 deaths per 100,000 workers.</p> <p>According to federal data, this is twice as high as the overall workers' COVID-19 death rate in 2020, which sits at 28.6 per 100,000.</p> <p>This was followed by food preparation and serving-related staff at 57.5 deaths per 100,000; construction and extraction workers at 57.3 per 100,000; transportation and material moving employees at 56 per 100,000; and farming, fishing and forestry workers at 54.8 per 100,000.</p> <p>By comparison, Americans working in jobs where they were surrounded by the sickest COVID-19 patients had lower death rates in 2020, the data shows.</p> <p>Health care support workers -- who help doctors and nurses care for patients, perform tests or manage equipment, among other tasks -- had a rate of 31.2 per 100,000.</p> <p>Meanwhile, health care practitioners had a rate of 19.1, below the national average.</p> <p>The study did not examine why some professions were more at risk of dying than others.</p> <p>However, the authors noted that many workers with high COVID-19 death rates were "often required to work in person throughout stay-at-home orders in 2020."</p> <p>What's more, these employees were more likely to be working in close proximity to others, both colleagues and the public, increasing their risk of infection.</p> <p>A report from the National Law Enforcement Memorial and Museum, which found COVID-19 to be the leading cause of death for officers in 2020 and 2021, said it was from direct exposure in the line of duty.</p> <p>"It has been reported to NLEOMF that these officers have died due to direct exposure to the virus during the commission of their official duties," the report said.</p> <p>Among those who died is 48-year-old Cedric Dixon, the first uniformed member of the New York Police Department to succumb to COVID-19 in March 2020.</p> <p>Dixon served the city for 23 years, according to the Detectives' Endowment Association.</p>

"We are hurting, we are crying, and we continue to fight," then-Commissioner Dermot Shea said at the time. "He was known as the person who would do anything to help you. He is going to be so sorely missed."

COVID-19 vaccines weren't available until the end of December 2020, and they've since been shown to be protective against severe illness and death.

However, many police officer and firefighter and [unions](#) across the country have pushed back against vaccine mandates, several of whom have been fired for refusing to comply.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 China's largest city Covid lockdown
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/shanghai-district-orders-mass-covid-19-testing-lockdown-92271697
GIST	<p>BEIJING -- China's largest city of Shanghai is ordering mass testing Friday on all 1.3 million residents of its downtown Yangpu district and confining them to their homes at least until results are known.</p> <p>The demand is an echo of measures ordered over the summer that led to a two-month lockdown of the entire city of 25 million that devastated the local economy, prompting food shortages and rare confrontations between residents and the authorities.</p> <p>At the start of the lockdown, authorities said they would last just days but then kept extending the deadline.</p> <p>China has shown no sign of backing away from its hardline "zero-COVID" policy since a major congress of the ruling Communist Party that concluded this week by awarding authoritarian leader Xi Jinping a third five-year term in power and packed top bodies with his loyalists.</p> <p>Strict measures have been imposed across the country, from Shanghai in the east to Tibet far to the west, where anti-lockdown protests have also been reported.</p> <p>Cell phone footage smuggled out of the region showed crowds of both native Tibetans and Han Chinese migrants milling in the streets of Lhasa to protest a lockdown that has lasted as long as 74 days. The footage was reportedly shot on Wednesday night but there was no sign of violence.</p> <p>Lhasa has been under tight surveillance since bloody anti-government protests broke out in the city in 2008 before spreading across Tibetan areas.</p> <p>Despite public anger, the former chairman of Shanghai's Communist Party Committee, the city's top official who was ultimately responsible for the lockdown measures, was given the No. 2 spot in the party's all-powerful Politburo Standing Committee — an indication of Xi's elevation of political loyalty above those capable of gaining public support through competent administration.</p> <p>Li Qiang, who had been Xi's virtual chief-of-staff while he headed the eastern province of Zhejiang, has been replaced by Beijing Mayor Chen Jining, a former president of Beijing's prestigious Tsinghua University and minister of environmental protection.</p> <p>Chen, 58, was educated at Brunel University London and worked at Imperial College London, where he earned a PhD degree in civil and environmental engineering in 1993.</p> <p>Many Chinese had hoped for a relaxation of the strict anti-COVID-19 protocols, which remain in place even while the rest of the world has opened up. China's borders remain largely closed and arrivals must undergo a 10-day quarantine at a designated space.</p>

Despite its costs, and the World Health Organization calling it unsustainable, China credits the strategy with keeping case numbers and deaths at a fraction of those in other countries, although Beijing's figures have frequently been questioned.

China on Friday reported a 1,337 new cases — most of them asymptomatic — and no new deaths. Shanghai reported 11 asymptomatic cases and Tibet had one confirmed case with symptoms and five asymptomatic cases. China says it has recorded a total of 258,660 cases and 5,226 deaths since the pandemic was first detected in the central city of Wuhan in late 2019.

In a sign China's tough measures will be maintained in the long term, Shanghai plans to build a permanent quarantine center on an island in the Huangpu River that divides the financial hub, according to the business magazine Caixin.

The 1.6-billion-yuan (\$221 million) project on Fuxing Island will expand existing facilities to create 3,009 isolation rooms and 3,250 beds, with construction expected to be completed in six months, Caixin said.

China's domestically developed vaccines are considered relatively ineffective and it has refused to approve foreign brands such as Pfizer, Moderna, AstraZeneca and J&J.

Still, China wants more people to get booster shots before it relaxes its restrictions. As of mid-October, 90% of Chinese were fully vaccinated and 57% had received a booster shot.

China has relied on domestically developed vaccines, primarily two inactivated vaccines that have proven effective in preventing death and serious disease but less so than the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines at stopping the spread of the disease.

Chinese authorities also have not mandated vaccination — entering an office building or other public places requires a negative COVID-19 test, not proof of vaccination. And the country's strict "zero-COVID" approach means that only a small proportion of the population has been infected and built immunity that way, compared to other places.

As a result, it's unclear how widely COVID-19 would spread if travel warnings and quarantine mandates were lifted. Until then, a hodgepodge of regulations and restrictions will remain in place across the country of 1.4 billion.

In Tibet's second-largest city of Shigatse, authorities announced that "normal living and production order" would resume from Friday.

Meanwhile, authorities on Wednesday ordered the lockdown of 900,000 people in Wuhan for at least five days. In remote Qinghai province, the urban districts of Xining city have been locked down since last Friday.

In Beijing, Universal Studios has closed its hotels and attractions "to comply with pandemic prevention and control."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 Hospitals near capacity for RSV infections
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/us-hospitals-report-beds-full-increase-respiratory-infections/story?id=92120799
GIST	<p>Some hospitals across the United States say their beds are full as cases of respiratory viruses continue to increase among children.</p> <p>According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, infections due to respiratory syncytial virus, or RSV, have spiked by 69% over the last four weeks from 4,667 to 7,917 and are appearing earlier than usual.</p>

At the same time, doctors are preparing for what could be the most severe flu season seen in years after little-to-no flu activity during the pandemic and the potential threat of COVID-19, which has traditionally increased during Thanksgiving over the last two years.

Dr. Anita Patel, attending in pediatric critical care medicine at Children's National Hospital in Washington, D.C., said she and her colleagues are seeing a rapidly diminishing number of available pediatric beds.

"We have been operating at essentially near capacity for the past several weeks," she told ABC News.

Patel said the high number of patients is mainly due to a mix of RSV cases and flu cases, the latter of which are 10 times higher this year compared to last year at her hospital.

"What I can tell you about the flu, which is pretty dramatic compared to last year, is we've seen already 80 patients that are positive for the flu across our health system, which is compared to only eight from last year. So, we really are seeing this early flu surge," she said.

Because of the surge in patients, this has led to between 10 and 20 children at any given point at Children's National emergency room waiting for a pediatric intensive care unit (PICU) bed, although Patel says PICU-level care has been provided to kids who are waiting to be transferred.

Additionally, staff at University of California, San Francisco Benioff Children's Hospital, in Oakland, say they are currently operating at capacity.

"We are earlier than usual in having a situation where our beds are full," Dr. April Zaat, a pediatric hospitalist at Benioff Children's, told local affiliate KGO-TV ABC 7. "I came in this morning and I'm on one of the in-patient teams. My team is full, our respiratory unit is full, and there were five to seven kids in the emergency room waiting for beds."

Zaat continued, "A lot of them have respiratory illnesses, like rhinovirus, enteroviruses. Sort of a potpourri if you will of respiratory viruses that are causing virus in kids. RSV is the main player."

Doctors are urging parents to get their children vaccinated, particularly against COVID-19 and the flu, to protect themselves and to help prevent an already strained health care system from becoming overburdened.

"One of the best ways to keep kids and adults out of the hospital is to make sure they're up to date on their vaccinations," Patel said. "I'm not just a PICU doctor, I'm also a mom. I made sure that my two-and-a-half-year-old is up to date on not only her COVID vaccination, but she's also received her flu shot -- and that is one of the best ways to prevent severe disease and hospitalization in our children."

In addition, Patel recommended that parents make sure their children are practicing good hand hygiene and staying home if they are sick. She also suggested families that have high-risk members consider wearing masks when indoors.

"Despite the constant debate about whether they work, the truth is that when masks are mandated viral transmission was very low," she said. "So, particularly in families where there are high-risk individuals at home, I would not hesitate to ask your children to wear masks if they're amenable to that."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 Nicaragua: US sanctions in more migrants
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/nicaraguas-ortega-us-sanctions-make-migrants-92253543
GIST	MEXICO CITY -- Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega said Thursday that new sanctions imposed on his government by the United States this week would only serve to drive more migrants to the U.S. border.

Speaking at an anniversary ceremony for the country Interior Ministry, Ortega said the United States has imposed more sanctions around the globe than any other country, “causing the greatest harm” and “then complaining about immigrants.”

They were the first comments by the Nicaraguan leader since the Biden administration announced new sanctions Monday.

Together with the Treasury Department’s simultaneous sanctioning of Nicaragua’s General Directorate of Mines, the executive order signed by President Joe Biden all but makes it illegal for Americans to do business with Nicaragua’s gold industry.

It is the first time the U.S. has identified a specific sector of Nicaragua’s economy as potentially off-limits and can be expanded in the future to include other industries believed to fill the government’s coffers.

Previous U.S. sanctions against Nicaragua targeted members of Ortega’s family and inner circle. There had been concern that broader sanctions affecting Nicaragua’s economy could drive more migration to the U. S. border.

Ortega has stepped up repression since clearing the field of potential opposition candidates ahead of his re-election to a fourth consecutive term last November. In addition to jailing dozens of opposition figures, the government has closed more than 1,000 civil society groups, shuttered independent media outlets and most recently jailed a Roman Catholic bishop and other clergy.

Since widespread social protests broke out in April 2018, most fleeing Nicaraguans headed to neighboring Costa Rica. But with that country’s overwhelmed asylum system and struggling economy more have instead migrated to the United States. For the fiscal year that ended in September, U.S. border agents encountered Nicaraguans nearly 164,000 times at the southwest border — more than triple the level for the previous year.

“They keep imposing sanctions and more immigrants will go to the United States,” Ortega said. “As much as they want to close the doors, there’s no door they can close to the immigrants.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 China ramps up election influence
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/10/27/china-strives-ramp-up-election-influence-this-year/
GIST	<p>A pro-China influence campaign pushed messages on social media seeking to discourage U.S. voters from casting ballots in the midterms, security researchers said Wednesday.</p> <p>The group, nicknamed “Dragonbridge,” has criticized U.S. society before, but “its targeting of the U.S. political system through attempts to discourage Americans from voting shows a willingness to use increasingly aggressive rhetoric,” according to Mandiant, a cybersecurity firm Google acquired last month.</p> <p>The research adds to a mounting body of evidence that the Chinese government and groups championing Chinese aims are quite interested in playing a hand in the 2022 elections. What do they hope to get out of it? Undermining the U.S. democratic system while boosting China.</p> <p>Beijing has embraced a strategy to strengthen its “discourse power,” its term for the ability to achieve more global influence.</p> <p>“One of discourse power’s central themes, and what Chinese policymakers talk openly about, is that the West’s governance model is disorganized, chaotic and frankly incapable of addressing the world’s 21st century problems,” Craig Singleton, a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies think</p>

tank, told me. “Those were all themes that were addressed in that social media campaign,” he said, referring to Dragonbridge.

Another clue

Mandiant’s Dragonbridge report came on the heels of other signs that China and pro-China groups are trying to stir things up in the run-up to the midterms.

- [The Cybersecurity 202 reported last week](#) that the FBI was warning political party organizations that apparent Chinese government-affiliated hackers were scanning their systems, a potential precursor to hacking operations.
- Also this month, the cybersecurity company Recorded Future [released a report](#) that examined a Chinese state-sponsored influence campaign designed to divide U.S. voters, which the firm said signified “a shift in tactics from previous US elections, where China’s influencers were less active in attempts to influence US voters.”
- [Facebook and Instagram parent Meta](#) said in September it had [taken down a small network of fake accounts](#) originating from China and targeting U.S. voters on both sides of the aisle, focused on domestic politics ahead of the midterms. “Chinese influence operations that we’ve disrupted before typically focused on criticizing the United States to international audiences, rather than primarily targeting domestic audiences in the US,” the company explained.
- [Also this week](#), the social media analytics company Alethea Group said it “[had identified at least 165 Twitter accounts](#), presenting as Americans on both sides of the U.S. political aisle, that posted politically polarizing content related to the 2022 U.S. midterm elections” and resembled the work of Dragonbridge.

There’s little evidence any of those efforts accomplished much. For instance, the Chinese hackers didn’t appear to breach any of the political party targets they scanned. But the mere existence of such would-be meddling attempts reveal intriguing dynamics.

In the case of Dragonbridge, “there’s no evidence that suggests they’ve been successful in changing hearts and minds,” **Sandra Joyce**, head of global intelligence for Mandiant, told me. “But what to me is very interesting is they’re incredibly resilient. They continue to put out content and they continue to scale their operations even though they’ve been detected worldwide.”

From 2020 to 2022

What’s less clear is why China might be choosing now to step up its activity. Beijing has broadly and routinely denied allegations of malfeasance in cyberspace.

China didn’t interfere in the 2020 presidential election, and contemplated but didn’t proceed with influence operations that cycle, [a U.S. intelligence community assessment concluded](#). The assessment said China likely reasoned that it wouldn’t benefit from either presidential candidate taking office more than the other. The same report said Russia and Iran, however, meddled in the U.S. presidential race in one way or another.

What little evidence there was of Chinese election interference in 2020 was indirect. [A U.S. intelligence official said](#) ahead of that Election Day that China “is expanding its influence efforts to shape the policy environment in the United States, pressure political figures it views as opposed to China’s interests, and counter criticism of China. Beijing recognizes its efforts might affect the presidential race.”

(There are other, prior signs of China [making moves on social media](#) or [with cyberespionage](#) in past elections, but with substantial differences from the 2022 cycle examples.)

The midterms have lower stakes, globally — which may actually have made them an inviting target for low-level operations, according to **Norma Krayem**, vice president and chair of Van Scoyoc Associates’ cybersecurity, privacy and digital innovation practice group.

“The 2022 elections are an easy way for them to have a test case to see how successful they can be,” Krayem, who has held executive branch posts, told me.

For Singleton, who doesn't see a major difference between China's 2020 and 2022 activity, **any increased Chinese willingness to mess with U.S. elections reflects the slow degeneration of Sino-American relations and China's resulting embrace of different tactics.**

"It's clear that in the last 18 months or so, China understands that U.S.-China relations are not going to be improving anytime soon," he said. "As Beijing has come to that realization, I think it's willing to take more risks, and I think it's willing to engage in this more extreme form of discourse warfare to achieve its political objectives."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 China establishes overseas police stations
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/china-accused-overseas-bases-target-dissidents-92184372
GIST	<p>THE HAGUE, Netherlands -- China has reportedly established dozens of "overseas police stations" in nations around the world that activists fear could be used to track and harass dissidents as part of Beijing's crackdown on corruption.</p> <p>Information about the outposts underscored concerns about the ruling Chinese Communist Party's influence over its citizens abroad, sometimes in ways deemed illegal by other countries, as well as the undermining of democratic institutions and the theft of economic and political secrets by bodies affiliated with the one-party state.</p> <p>Spanish-based non-government group Safeguard Defenders published a report last month, called "110 Overseas. Chinese Transnational Policing Gone Wild," that focused on the foreign stations.</p> <p>Laura Harth, a campaign director with the group, told The Associated Press that China has set up at least 54 overseas police service stations.</p> <p>"One of the aims of these campaigns, obviously, as it is to crack down on dissent, is to silence people," Harth said. "So people are afraid. People that are being targeted, that have family members back in China, are afraid to speak out."</p> <p>Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said Thursday that Beijing wasn't doing anything wrong. "Chinese public security authorities strictly observe the international law and fully respect the judicial sovereignty of other countries," Mao said.</p> <p>Many of the facilities appeared to have links to the Fuzhou and Qingtian areas, where many overseas Chinese originate.</p> <p>The Irish government said it told China to close a Fuzhou Police Overseas Service Station operating in Dublin. The Department of Foreign Affairs said Chinese authorities did not make an advance request to set up the office.</p> <p>"Actions of all foreign states on Irish territory must be in compliance with international law and domestic law requirements," the Irish government said, noting why it had told the Chinese Embassy that the office "should close and cease operations."</p> <p>"The Chinese Embassy has now stated that the activities of the office have ceased," it said.</p> <p>The Dutch government said this week it was looking into whether two such police stations — one a virtual office in Amsterdam and the other at a physical address in Rotterdam — were established in the Netherlands.</p>

"We are investigating the activities of these so-called police centers. Once there is more clarity on the matter, we will decide on appropriate action," the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement sent to the AP. "We have not been informed about these centers via diplomatic channels."

Another Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Wang Wenbin, described the foreign outposts identified by Safeguard Defenders as service stations for Chinese people who are abroad and in need of help with, for instance, renewing their driver's licenses.

Wang added that China also has cracked down on what he called transnational crimes but said the operation was conducted in line with international law.

In its report, Safeguard Defenders reproduced Chinese media accounts about people suspected of alleged crimes in China being interrogated by video link from some of the locations in other countries that Beijing allegedly did not declare to other governments.

In one instance, according to the group, a Chinese man accused of environmental crimes was persuaded in 2020 to return from Madrid to Qingtian, in Zhejiang province, where he turned himself in to authorities.

Visits by The Associated Press to some of the locations identified by Safeguard Defenders in Rome, Madrid and Barcelona found, respectively, a massage parlor, the Spanish headquarters of an association of citizens from Qingtian and a firm providing legal translation services. There was no indication of police stations or other activity directly related to the Chinese government.

A worker at the Barcelona translation company confirmed to the AP that a Fuzhou Police Overseas Service Station operated on the premises for a few weeks this year in a test-drive capacity.

The employee, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to journalists, the press, said the police service center offered document renewal services to Fuzhou citizens living in the Barcelona region who could not return to China due to pandemic travel restrictions and the high cost of flights.

According to Safeguard Defenders, China claims 230,000 suspects of fraud were "persuaded to return" to China from April 2021 to July 2022.

"These operations eschew official bilateral police and judicial cooperation and violate the international rule of law, and may violate the territorial integrity of third countries involved in setting up a parallel policing mechanism using illegal methods," its report said.

The European Union's executive arm said Thursday it was up to member countries to investigate such allegations since it would be a matter of national sovereignty.

A Hungarian opposition lawmaker claimed this month to have discovered two sites in Budapest where Chinese overseas police stations operated without the knowledge of the country's Interior Ministry.

The lawmaker, Marton Tompos, said one of the two locations in Hungary's capital had a sign that said Qingtian Overseas Police Station. Tompos said he was unable to contact anyone affiliated with the sites and that when he visited again days later, the sign had been removed.

The Hungarian Interior Ministry did not immediately respond to AP questions on the matter.

Three informal Chinese police stations are operating in Portugal, Safeguard Defenders reported. Portuguese authorities did not immediately reply to AP questions about the claim.

A Portuguese TV report said one of the venues, located in an industrial complex in northern Portugal, appeared to be a car shop operated by a Chinese man. The man denied any connection with the Chinese

government, though broadcaster S.I.C. Noticias showed him in a video promoting the Beijing Winter Olympics and said he heads a local association that helps Chinese immigrants.

In Tanzania, both police and the Chinese Embassy have denied the presence of a Chinese-run police station in the country's commercial hub and former capital, Dar es Salaam, after the BBC reported on it last week.

"You are fabricating stories," the embassy tweeted, calling the report an example of disinformation aimed at dividing China-Africa relations. A police spokesman sent the AP a copy of China's denial in response to questions Thursday.

In Lesotho, a kingdom in southern Africa, national police Senior Superintendent Mpiti Mopeli also denied the existence of any Chinese law enforcement activities. He said such operations would be illegal as any form of policing in Lesotho is conducted by local authorities.

Over his decade in power, Chinese President Xi Jinping has pushed a relentless anti-corruption drive that has seen tens of millions of Communist Party cadres investigated and expanded overseas via a pair of campaigns known as Sky Net and Fox Hunt. Both are tasked with locating allegedly corrupt officials who have fled abroad and convincing them to return to China with their stolen state assets.

Since China began opening up in the 1980s, corruption has been a major problem among those enjoying access to state funds and resources with few safeguards in place, and cash was often squirreled away abroad, particularly in the U.S. and other countries without extradition treaties with China.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 Iraq parliament approves new Cabinet
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/iraqi-parliament-long-awaited-cabinet-approval-vote-92218594
GIST	<p>BAGHDAD -- Iraq's parliament gave its vote of confidence to a new Cabinet on Thursday, breaking a yearlong political stalemate. It's the first government since 2005 that doesn't include members from the bloc of a powerful Shiite cleric.</p> <p>A majority of the 253 lawmakers present voted to appoint 21 ministers, with two posts — the Construction and Housing Ministry and the Environment Ministry — remaining undecided. Despite those two unresolved appointments, the approved Cabinet lineup constitutes a quorum.</p> <p>The Cabinet headed by Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani is the first since 2005 that does not include seats for the bloc of influential Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr.</p> <p>Iraq held early elections more than a year ago in response to mass anti-government protests that began in October 2019 in Baghdad and across southern Iraq. Protesters called for the overhaul of the political system established after the 2003 U.S.-led invasion.</p> <p>Following the election, which gave a plurality to the alliance led by al-Sadr, political infighting delayed the forming of a government for more than a year. This was driven largely by a political rivalry between al-Sadr and Iran-backed former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki.</p> <p>Al-Sadr's bloc withdrew from the parliament amid the stalemate. In July, following the nomination of Mohammed al-Sudani for prime minister by Iran-backed parties, followers of al-Sadr stormed the heavily fortified Green Zone and the Iraqi parliament.</p> <p>The following month, street fights between followers of al-Sadr and members of the rival Popular Mobilization Forces left at least 30 people dead and dozens more injured. Following the clashes, al-Sadr withdrew his followers from the parliament.</p>

After their withdrawal, al-Sadr's rivals in the Coordination Framework group led by al-Maliki were able to form an alliance with Kurdish and Sunnis parties on forming a government.

On Oct. 13, Iraqi lawmakers elected former minister Abdul Latif Rashid president following a barrage of rocket attacks earlier in the day, in a first step toward naming a new government.

The lead-up to Thursday's vote was marked by anxiety about more potential violence, but the streets of the capital remained quiet.

Independent lawmaker Raed al-Maliki said he anticipates that al-Sadr will wait to observe the public's reception of the new government before reacting.

"I expect that street protests will begin if this government doesn't succeed," he said, noting that the new Cabinet will face "major challenges in terms of reforms, combating corruption, climate change and unemployment."

Along with the Cabinet post appointments, parliament approved a program that includes amending the elections law within three months of the ministers being sworn in, with early elections to be held within a year after that. The document also calls for measures to fight corruption, speed up reconstruction of areas damaged by armed conflict and return the displaced to their homes. It also calls for the elimination of "uncontrolled weapons" held by non-state actors.

Al-Sudani said ahead of the vote that the new government will combat "the epidemic of corruption that has affected all aspects of life ... and has been the cause of many economic problems, weakening the state's authority, increasing poverty, unemployment, and poor public services."

He also promised the Cabinet will work to build the capabilities of local governments and to "find sustainable solutions to the outstanding issues with Iraq's Kurdistan Regional Government through a true partnership based on rights and duties."

Former Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi, speaking after the vote, defended his own government's record and urged all political blocs to "support every endeavor of the new government on the path of stability and growth and defending democracy and human rights."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 EU approves ban gas-engine cars from 2035
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/eu-approves-ban-combustion-engine-cars-2035-92272100
GIST	<p>BRUSSELS -- The European Parliament and EU member countries have reached a deal to ban the sale of new gasoline and diesel cars and vans by 2035.</p> <p>EU negotiators sealed on Thursday night the first agreement of the bloc's "Fit for 55" package set up by the Commission to achieve the EU's climate goals of cutting emissions of the gases that cause global warming by 55% over this decade.</p> <p>The EU Parliament said the deal is a "clear signal ahead of the UN COP27 Climate Change Conference that the EU is serious about adopting concrete laws to reach the more ambitious targets set out in the EU Climate Law."</p> <p>According to the bloc's data, transport is the only sector where greenhouse gas emissions have increased in the past three decades, rising 33.5% between 1990 and 2019. Passenger cars are a major polluter, accounting for 61% of total CO2 emissions from EU road transport.</p> <p>The EU wants to drastically reduce gas emission from transportation by 2050 and promote electric cars, but a report from the bloc's external auditor showed last year that the region is lacking the appropriate charging stations.</p>

	<p>“This is a historic decision as it sets for the first time a clear decarbonization pathway — with targets in 2025, 2030 and 2035 and aligned with our goal of climate neutrality by 2050,” boasted Pascal Canfin, the chair of the environment committee of the European Parliament. “This sector, which accounts for 16% of European emissions at the moment, will be carbon neutral by 2050.”</p> <p>World leaders agreed in Paris in 2015 to work to keep global temperatures from increasing more than 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit), and ideally no more than 1.5 degrees C (2.7 F) by the end of the century. Scientists even the less ambitious goal will be missed by a wide margin unless drastic steps are taken to reduce emissions.</p> <p>Greenpeace said the 2035 deadline is too late to limit global warming to below 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit).</p> <p>“The EU is taking the scenic route, and that route ends in disaster,” said Greenpeace EU transport campaigner Lorelei Limousin. “A European 2035 phase-out of fossil fuel-burning cars is not quick enough: New cars with internal combustion engines should be banned by 2028 at the latest. The announcement is a perfect example of where politicians can bask in a feel-good headline that masks the reality of their repeated failures to act on climate.”</p> <p>The EU Parliament and member states will now have to formally approve the agreement before it comes into force.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/27 Bosnia pro-Russia Serb leader won election
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/bosnia-recount-confirms-pro-russia-serb-leader-won-92204605
GIST	<p>SARAJEVO, Bosnia-Herzegovina -- An election recount confirmed a staunchly pro-Russia Bosnian Serb leader’s victory over an opposition challenger who accused him of vote-rigging in the contest for the presidency of Bosnia’s Serb-run part.</p> <p>Bosnia’s top electoral body announced Thursday the recount showed the contested Oct 2. election was won by Bosnian Serb hardliner Milorad Dodik. The Central Election Commission said the repeated count revealed numerous irregularities it had notified judicial authorities about but that none were on a level that would have changed the outcome of the vote.</p> <p>The election included races for all levels of government in the Balkan country’s Serb-dominated and Bosniak-Croat parts, as well as for the joint central institutions that link the two.</p> <p>Dodik declared victory shortly after polling stations closed, but his main contender, Jelena Trivic, insisted the vote was rigged and claimed she was the winner.</p> <p>Dodik has been practically unchallenged as Bosnia’s top Serb leader for over a decade despite being sanctioned by the West for corruption. He advocates the separation of Bosnia’s Serb-run part, Republika Srpska, from the rest of the country and having it become part of neighbouring Serbia.</p> <p>He used the election campaign to champion his secessionist agenda and his close ties with Russia. In September, he traveled to Moscow to meet Russian President Vladimir Putin and secure his explicit endorsement.</p> <p>Dodik’s increasing anti-Western rhetoric has raised fears in Europe and the United States that the Kremlin might use him to create further instability in volatile Bosnia to avert some attention from its war in Ukraine.</p>

	Separatist ambitions among ethnic Serbs sparked Bosnia's devastating 1992-95 war, which killed more than 100,000 people, displaced millions and shattered the country for years to come. A U.S.-brokered peace agreement that ended the war created the Serb and Bosniak-Croat entities, tied loosely by joint, multi-ethnic institutions.
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/27 Ukraine attacks Russia hold on Kherson
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/ukraine-power-workers-drone-attacks-strain-grid-92178752
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine -- Ukrainian forces attacked Russia's hold on the southern city of Kherson on Thursday while fighting intensified in the country's east. The battles came amid reports that Moscow-appointed authorities have abandoned the city, joining tens of thousands of residents who fled to other Russia-held areas.</p> <p>Ukrainian forces were surrounding Kherson from the west and attacking Russia's foothold on the west bank of the Dnieper River, which divides the region and the country.</p> <p>As the battles unfolded, Russian President Vladimir Putin said that Moscow has no intention to use nuclear weapons in Ukraine, despite issuing repeated warnings in the past that he was prepared to use all available means to defend Russia, including its nuclear arsenal.</p> <p>"We see no need for that," Putin said at a conference of international foreign policy experts outside Moscow. "There is no point in that, neither political nor military."</p> <p>The Russian leader, who insisted for weeks before the invasion that he did not intend to attack Ukraine, also sought to cast the conflict as part of efforts by the West to secure global domination. He accused the U.S. and its allies of trying to dictate their terms to other nations in a "dangerous and bloody" domination game.</p> <p>Putin, whose troops invaded on Feb. 24, has described Western support for Ukraine as part of broad efforts by Washington and its allies to enforce what they call a rules-based world order that only foments chaos.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Russia warned that Moscow could target Western commercial satellites used for military purposes in support of Ukraine, and a Foreign Ministry spokeswoman accused the United States of pursuing "thoughtless and mad" escalation.</p> <p>Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova argued that Washington should take an approach more like it did during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, when the Cold War superpowers stepped back from the brink of nuclear confrontation.</p> <p>"The more the U.S. is drawn into supporting the Kyiv regime on the battlefield, the more they risk provoking a direct military confrontation between the biggest nuclear powers fraught with catastrophic consequences," Zakharova said.</p> <p>Ukraine has pushed ahead with an offensive to reclaim the Kherson region and its capital of the same name, which Russian forces captured during the first days of a war now in its ninth month.</p> <p>More than 70,000 residents from the Kherson city area have evacuated in recent days, the region's Kremlin-installed governor, Vladimir Saldo, said Thursday.</p> <p>Members of the Russia-backed regional administration also fled, the deputy governor, Kirill Stremousov said. Monuments to Russian heroes were moved, along with the remains of Grigory Potemkin, the Russian general who founded Kherson in the 18th century. His remains were kept at the city's St. Catherine's Church.</p>

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy described reports of Russian troops' possible withdrawal from the city as disinformation.

"I don't see them fleeing from Kherson," Zelenskyy said in an interview with Italy's Corriere della Sera newspaper. "This is an information attack, so that we go there, transfer troops from other dangerous directions there."

Zelenskyy also dismissed as "theater" recent attempts by local Kremlin-backed officials to persuade the city's civilian residents to relocate deeper into Russian-held territory ahead of the Ukrainian advance.

"Their most trained soldiers are in position. We see this and do not believe them," Zelenskyy said.

In eastern Ukraine, Russian forces continued to bombard the city of Bakhmut in the Donetsk region, making slow gains toward the center.

The deputy head of Russia's delegation at a U.N. arms control panel, Konstantin Vorontsov, described the use of U.S. and other Western commercial satellites for military purposes during the fighting as "extremely dangerous."

"The quasi-civilian infrastructure could be a legitimate target for a retaliatory strike," Vorontsov warned.

As they have all month, Russian forces carried out attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure that have caused increasing worry ahead of winter.

A Russian drone attack early Thursday hit an energy facility near the capital of Kyiv, causing a fire, said Kyiv regional Gov. Oleksiy Kuleba. He said the latest attacks inflicted "very serious damage."

Kuleba announced new rolling blackouts and urged consumers to save power. He said authorities were still pondering how to restore service.

Kyrylo Tymoshenko, deputy head of Ukraine's presidential office, said rolling blackouts would also be introduced in the neighboring Chernihiv, Cherkasy and Zhytomyr regions.

Zelenskyy has said that Russian attacks have already destroyed 30% of the country's energy infrastructure.

In a likely response to Russia's assaults on Ukrainian infrastructure, a drone attacked a power plant just outside Sevastopol, a port in the Russian-annexed region of Crimea. The plant sustained minor damage, according to city leader Mikhail Razvozhayev. He said electricity supplies were uninterrupted.

Crimea was annexed by Russia from Ukraine in 2014. It has faced drone attacks and explosions amid the fighting in Ukraine. In a major setback for the Kremlin, a powerful truck bomb blew up a section of a strategic bridge linking Crimea to Russia's mainland on Oct. 8.

A senior Ukrainian military officer accused Russia of planning to stage explosions at the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant and blame them on Ukraine in a false-flag attack.

Gen. Oleksii Gromov, the chief of the main operational department of the Ukrainian military's general staff, pointed to Moscow's repeated unfounded allegations that Ukraine was plotting to detonate a radioactive dirty bomb as a possible signal that Moscow was planning explosions at the plant, Europe's largest nuclear power station.

Russia took control of the Zaporizhzhia plant in the opening days of the invasion. Russia and Ukraine have accused each other of attacking the plant, which had its reactors shut down following continuous shelling.

Elsewhere, Ukrainian authorities reported that another mass grave was discovered in territory recently reclaimed from Russia. It contained up to 17 bodies of soldiers and civilians.

The Ukrainian Interior Ministry said in a statement that police found the grave outside the city of Izium after being tipped off by local residents.

The statement cited locals as saying that Russian troops dumped bodies in a pit outside the nearby village of Kopanky in mid-April, then leveled the ground with tanks.

In other developments, Ukrainian authorities said they were launching a criminal case against Russia's children's rights commissioner, accusing her of enabling the abduction and forced adoption of thousands of vulnerable Ukrainian children.

Maria Lvova-Belova said this week that she herself has adopted a boy seized by the Russian army in the bombed-out city of Mariupol.

Last month, she was sanctioned by the U.S., U.K. and other Western nations over allegations that she masterminded the removal of over 2,000 vulnerable children from the embattled Donetsk and Luhansk region in Ukraine's east. According to Ukraine, she orchestrated a new policy to facilitate their forced placement with "foster families" in Russia.

Zelenskyy ended the day on an emotional note, pointing out in his nightly address to the nation that Ukraine on Friday marks the anniversary of its liberation from the Nazis in World War II. This year, he said, the holiday carries special significance.

"Evil always ends the same way. The occupier becomes a capitulator, the invader — a fugitive. War criminals become defendants. Aggression becomes a court verdict. Destruction turns into reparations. Enemy equipment becomes museum exhibits," Zelenskyy said.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/28 Seoul: NKorea fires 2 ballistic missiles
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/korea-fires-ballistic-missile-sea-seoul-92254968
GIST	<p>SEOUL, South Korea -- North Korea fired two short-range ballistic missiles toward the sea on Friday in its first ballistic weapons launches in two weeks, as the U.S. military warned the North that the use of nuclear weapons "will result in the end of that regime."</p> <p>South Korea's military detected the two launches from the North's eastern coastal Tongchon area around midday on Friday, Seoul's Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement. It said both missiles flew about 230 kilometers (140 miles) at a maximum altitude of 24 kilometers (15 miles).</p> <p>The statement said South Korea strongly condemns the launches, calling them "a grave provocation" that undermines regional peace and violates U.N. Security Council resolutions banning any ballistic activities by North Korea. It said South Korea has boosted its surveillance on North Korea.</p> <p>The U.S. Indo Pacific Command said the launches did not pose an immediate threat to the United States or its allies but highlighted the "destabilizing impact" of North Korea's illicit nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs.</p> <p>The Japanese Defense Ministry said it also detected the launches and that the type of missiles used and their flight information were still being analyzed.</p> <p>The back-to-back launches, the North's first ballistic missile tests since Oct. 14, came on the final day of South Korea's annual 12-day "Hoguk" field exercises, which also involved an unspecified number of U.S. troops this year. Next week, South Korean and U.S. air forces plan to conduct a large-scale training as well.</p>

North Korea sees such regular drills by Seoul and Washington as practice for launching an attack on the North, though the allies say their exercises are defensive in nature.

Next week's "Vigilant Storm" aerial drills are to run from Monday to Friday and involve about 140 South Korean warplanes and about 100 U.S. aircraft. The planes include sophisticated fighter jets like F-35 from both nations, South Korea's Defense Ministry said in a statement earlier Friday.

Since late September, North Korea has launched a barrage of missiles toward the sea in what it called simulated tests of tactical nuclear weapons systems designed to attack South Korean and U.S. targets. North Korea says its testing activities were meant to issue a warning amid a series of South Korea-U.S. military drills. But some experts say Pyongyang has also used its rivals' drills as a chance to test new weapons systems, boost its nuclear capability and increase its leverage in future dealings with Washington and Seoul.

Tongchon, the launch site for the North's Friday launches, is about 60 kilometers (37 miles) away from the inter-Korean land border. The area was apparently closer to South Korea than any other missile launch site North Korea has used so far this year.

South Korea and the United States have strongly warned North Korea against using its nuclear weapons preemptively.

The Pentagon's National Defense Strategy report issued on Thursday stated that any nuclear attack by North Korea against the United States or its allies and partners "will result in the end of that regime."

"There is no scenario in which the Kim regime could employ nuclear weapons and survive," the report said. The Pentagon said it will continue to deter North Korean attacks through "forward posture," including nuclear deterrence, integrated air and missile defenses, and close coordination and interoperability with South Korea.

During a visit to Tokyo on Tuesday, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman reiterated that the United States would fully use its military capabilities, "including nuclear," to defend its allies South Korea and Japan.

Last month, South Korea's Defense Ministry warned North Korea that using its nuclear weapons would put it on a "path of self-destruction."

There are concerns that the North could up the ante in the coming weeks by conducting its first nuclear test since 2017.

Rafael Grossi, chief of the International Atomic Energy Agency, said Thursday that a new nuclear test explosion by North Korea "would be yet another confirmation of a program which is moving full steam ahead in a way that is incredibly concerning."

He said the U.N. agency has been observing preparations for a new test, which would be the North's seventh overall, but gave no indication of whether an atomic blast is imminent.

In recent days, North Korea has also fired hundreds of shells in inter-Korean maritime buffer zones that the two Koreas established in 2018 to reduce frontline military tensions. North Korea has said the artillery firings were in reaction to South Korean live-fire exercises at land border areas.

On Monday, the rival Koreas exchanged warning shots along their disputed western sea boundary, a scene of past bloodshed and naval battles, as they accused each other of violating the boundary.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 NYC Fire Dept. 1 st female fire commissioner
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/york-city-fire-department-led-woman-1st-time/story?id=92205691

GIST	<p>The largest fire department in the country has officially welcomed its first female commissioner.</p> <p>Laura Kavanagh was sworn in Thursday morning as the head of the New York City Fire Department. She had been serving as acting commissioner of the department since February.</p> <p>Kavanagh, 40, was surrounded by other top female officials in the mayor's administration for what Mayor Eric Adams called a "historic appointment."</p> <p>"To say it is an honor of a lifetime is an understatement," said Kavanagh, who will oversee the agency's 17,000 employees, including firefighters, EMTs and paramedics, and a \$2 billion budget.</p> <p>She acknowledged her place as the first female leader of the FDNY in its 157-year history.</p> <p>"This is the type of FDNY commissioner I will be -- one that knows that I will succeed only if every person in my department and in our city sees my place at the table as also their own," she said. "This moment, me being first, only matters if I am not the last."</p> <p>Adams said his administration conducted a national search for the next FDNY commissioner, but that they kept coming back to Kavanagh.</p> <p>"Her style of leadership and commitment is just a reflection of what this city has to offer," he said.</p> <p>Kavanagh has worked for the agency for nearly a decade, including as first deputy commissioner. She became acting-fire commissioner after longtime Commissioner Daniel Nigro retired without naming a successor.</p> <p>Adams touted work in the FDNY's response to the Ebola outbreak of 2015 and the COVID-19 pandemic. She also oversaw a firefighter recruitment campaign that saw the department's most diverse applicant pool in its history, including graduating the largest class of women in three decades, he said.</p> <p>In March, 13 women were among the graduating class of probationary firefighters. In August, eight women were among the graduates, bringing the total number of female firefighters in the city to 141, the most in FDNY history, the city said. Amid efforts to diversify the department, a recent New York City Council report found that women are underrepresented, with under 2% of firefighters being female.</p> <p>Kavanagh's appointment was met with support from several firefighting and EMT advocacy organizations and unions, including the Uniformed Firefighters Association; the Uniformed EMS, Paramedics, & Fire Inspectors Local 2507; the Uniformed EMS Officers Association, Local 3621; the FDNY Vulcan Society; the National Association of Hispanic Firefighters; and the United Women Firefighters Association.</p> <p>"Women have bravely served in the FDNY since 1982. This appointment of Laura Kavanagh highlights the ability, dedication and service which women demonstrate every day to the people of New York," Jackie-Michelle Martinez, president of the United Women Firefighters, said in a statement. "As the number of female firefighters increases, there will be continued interest in ensuring and creating a fair and amicable work environment."</p> <p>Kavanagh's appointment follows in the footsteps of another historic first for the city. Earlier this year, Keechant Sewell became the first woman to serve as commissioner of the New York City Police Department, the largest police department in the country.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	10/27 Hawaii officials: Mauna Loa sending signals
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/hawaiis-big-island-warning-huge-volcano-rumbles-92217934
GIST	HONOLULU -- Hawaii officials are warning residents of the Big Island that the world's largest active volcano, Mauna Loa, is sending signals that it may erupt.

Scientists say an eruption isn't imminent, but they are on alert because of a recent spike in earthquakes at the volcano's summit. Experts say it would take just a few hours for lava to reach homes closest to vents on the volcano, which last erupted in 1984.

Hawaii's civil defense agency is holding meetings across the island to educate residents about how to prepare for a possible emergency. They recommend having a "go" bag with food, identifying a place to stay once they leave home and making a plan for reuniting with family members.

"Not to panic everybody, but they have to be aware of that you live on the slopes of Mauna Loa. There's a potential for some kind of lava disaster," said Talmadge Magno, the administrator for Hawaii County Civil Defense.

The volcano makes up 51% of the Hawaii Island landmass, so a large portion of the island has the potential to be affected by an eruption, Magno said.

There's been a surge of development on the Big Island in recent decades — its population has more than doubled to 200,000 today from 92,000 in 1980 — and many newer residents weren't around when Mauna Loa last erupted 38 years ago. All the more reason why Magno said officials are spreading the word about the science of the volcano and urging people to be prepared.

Mauna Loa, rising 13,679 feet (4,169 meters) above sea level, is the much larger neighbor to Kilauea volcano, which erupted in a residential neighborhood and destroyed 700 homes in 2018. Some of its slopes are much steeper than Kilauea's so when it erupts, its lava can flow much faster.

During a 1950 eruption, the mountain's lava traveled 15 miles (24 kilometers) to the ocean in less than three hours.

The Hawaiian Volcano Observatory, which is part of the U.S. Geological Survey, said Mauna Loa has been in a state of "heightened unrest" since the middle of last month when the number of summit earthquakes jumped from 10 to 20 per day to 40 to 50 per day.

Scientists believe more earthquakes are occurring because more magma is flowing into Mauna Loa's summit reservoir system from the hot spot under the earth's surface that feeds molten rock to Hawaii's volcanoes.

The temblors have declined in frequency in recent days but could rise again.

More than 220 people attended a community meeting last weekend that county civil defense officials held in Ocean View, a neighborhood that lava could reach in hours if molten rock erupts through vents on Mauna Loa's southwest flank.

Bob Werner, an Ocean View resident who didn't attend the meeting, said it's wise to be aware of a possible eruption but not to fear it. He's not concerned that the neighborhood would be completely cut off, if lava flows across the only road connecting it to the bigger towns of Kailua-Kona and Hilo, where many people do their shopping.

The "greater concern is it will be extremely annoying to drive an extra hour or two hours to get the same stuff," he said.

Ryan Williams, the owner of the Margarita Village bar in Hilo, said the volcanic unrest wasn't worrying customers who are used to warnings.

There could still be a heightened sense of urgency since officials have been holding town hall meetings, urging people to prepare.

“But everything I’ve read or heard, they trying to kind of assure people that conditions have not changed,” Williams said. “There’s no imminent eruption, but just to be alert.”

Magno said his agency is talking to residents now because communities closest to vents likely wouldn’t have enough time to learn how to respond and prepare once the observatory raises its alert level to “watch,” which means an eruption is imminent.

The current alert level is “advisory” meaning the volcano is showing signs of unrest yet there’s no indication an eruption is likely or certain.

Residents in other parts of the island would have more time to react.

Lava from Mauna Loa’s northeast flank could take days or weeks to reach residential communities. That’s because the mountain’s slopes on that side are relatively gentle and because towns are farther from volcanic vents.

Frank Trusdell, research geologist at the Hawaiian Volcano Observatory, said all of Mauna Loa’s eruptions in recorded history have started in its summit crater. About half of them stayed there, while the other half later spewed lava from vents lower down the mountain.

Lava erupting from the summit generally doesn’t travel far enough to reach residential areas.

Mauna Loa has erupted 33 times since 1843. It last erupted in 1984 when lava flowed down its eastern flank only to stop 4.5 miles (7.2 kilometers) short of Hilo, the Big Island’s most populous town.

Mauna Loa also has a history of disgorging huge volumes of lava.

In the 1950 eruption, which lasted for 23 days, Mauna Loa released 1,000 cubic meters (1,307 cubic yards) of lava per second. In contrast, Kilauea released 300 cubic meters (392 cubic yards) per second in 2018.

The earthquakes could continue for a while before any eruption: increased seismic activity lasted for a year before a 1975 eruption and a year-and-a-half before the 1984 one. Alternatively, the temblors could subside and Mauna Loa may not erupt this time.

Trusdell said residents should look at his agency’s maps and learn how quickly lava may show up in their neighborhood. He also urged people living in one of the short-notice areas to pay attention if the summit turns red.

“All you got to do is look up there and see the glow. You grab your stuff, throw it in the car and drive. Go!” he said.

They can always go home after if the lava ultimately doesn’t flow into their neighborhood, he said.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 Concerns: Miami Beach condo evacuated
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/miami-beach-condo-evacuated-engineer-raises-concerns-92237050
GIST	<p>MIAMI BEACH -- Officials in Miami Beach ordered residents of a 164-unit high-rise condo building to evacuate Thursday following safety concerns reported by a structural engineer.</p> <p>The city posted an unsafe structure notice at the oceanfront Port Royale Condominium, Miami Beach spokesperson Melissa Berthier said in an email.</p> <p>The 14-story building, built in 1971, is undergoing a recertification required at 50 years old, and an engineer discovered excessive movement of a concrete beam from its original position in the garage level, Berthier said.</p>

	<p>Inspection Engineers Inc. said in a letter to the city that it was working with a shoring expert to obtain a permit from the city. The new shoring should be installed within 10 days, and then engineers would inspect the building again.</p> <p>Other buildings in South Florida have been evacuated in similar safety scares since the June 2021 collapse in Surfside, which killed 98 people just a few miles up the beach from Port Royale.</p> <p>The Champlain Towers South collapse focused scrutiny on the structural integrity of aging condominium towers throughout Florida, especially along its coastlines, and the state has since moved to strengthen laws requiring inspections and periodic recertification of buildings.</p> <p>Miami-Dade County had required the first recertification only after 40 years, and the Surfside building was undergoing that recertification process when it collapsed.</p> <p>New state rules signed into law in May require buildings to have their first recertification after 30 years — or 25 if they are within 3 miles (5 kilometers) of the coast, and then every 10 years thereafter.</p>
Return to Top	

Cyber, Tech Awareness

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	10/28 Tech boom ends
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/tech-boom-ends-as-companies-from-amazon-to-meta-adjust-to-turbulent-times-11666957789
GIST	<p>A week of Big Tech earnings has been a rout for investors, as recession fears and the strong dollar signal demand weakness is broadening and hitting businesses that were thought to be more resilient.</p> <p>And these industry giants warn more pain is ahead.</p> <p>“It’s just hard to see any points of good news on the horizon,” Intel Corp. INTC -3.45%decrease; red down pointing triangle Chief Executive Pat Gelsinger said. Inflation in the U.S., Europe’s economy rattled by high energy costs and the war in Ukraine, and disruptions in Asia mean “we’re still looking to have the economic headwinds as we go into next year,” he said Thursday as the company cut its full-year sales outlook.</p> <p>Tech companies that enjoyed strong growth in the early days of the pandemic are feeling the effects of a new reality of high inflation, rising interest rates, currency headwinds and other issues on their income statements. The slowdown in personal computers and digital advertising seen earlier this year appears to be spreading to areas such as cloud computing that were thought to be resistant to economic weakness.</p> <p>As a result, leaders Apple Inc., AAPL -3.05%decrease; red down pointing triangle Amazon AMZN -4.06%decrease; red down pointing triangle .com Inc., Microsoft Corp., MSFT -1.98%decrease; red down pointing triangle Facebook parent Meta META -24.56%decrease; red down pointing triangle Platforms Inc. and Google parent Alphabet Inc. GOOG -2.34%decrease; red down pointing triangle are sharpening their control over costs and monitoring head count—sounding more like old blue chips than highflying tech juggernauts.</p> <p>Meanwhile, investors in those five companies have lost more than \$580 billion combined through Thursday’s post-market trading, after quarterly earnings—often paired with muted forecasts—pummeled their stocks.</p> <p>Amazon’s sales forecast for the current quarter, for example, missed Wall Street expectations by up to \$15 billion, causing its shares to fall more than 12% in premarket trading Friday.</p>

Growth in the cloud-computing sector, an indicator of broader business adoption of tech, has fallen faster than expected from the highs of the past two years. Amazon Web Services posted a 27% year-over-year increase in net sales, down from its 39% growth a year earlier. Microsoft's [cloud-computing figure](#) came in at 35% for the most recent quarter, compared with 50% a year ago, and is expected to slow sequentially this quarter, Chief Financial Officer Amy Hood said.

The industrial sector also showed clear signs in the third quarter of feeling the effects. "We saw weakness begin to broaden in the industrial market," Dave Pahl, head of investor relations at chip maker [Texas Instruments](#) Inc., [TXN -0.70% decrease; red down pointing triangle](#) said on an analysts call Tuesday.

Those problems are only compounding an already difficult market for tech companies with [PC and other personal electronics slumping](#). Worldwide shipments of personal computers [dropped nearly 20% in the third quarter](#) from the year-ago period—the steepest decline in more than two decades, according to [Gartner](#) Inc.

Intel reported a sharp decline in quarterly sales, cut its expectation for PC shipments this year, and said next year could be even worse. Microsoft saw sales of its Windows operating system fall 15% during the September quarter, with sales there expected to drop more than 30% in the current quarter.

Apple's iPhone sales came in slightly under analyst expectations, but have largely avoided impacts from the macroeconomic headwinds that have been hitting its fellow tech giants, Chief Executive Tim Cook said. The company said [overall sales growth in the current quarter](#) would be more subdued than during the three-months ended in September.

[Samsung Electronics](#) Co., [SSNHZ 0.00% increase; green up pointing triangle](#) South Korea's electronics and chip giant, [posted a 23.6% decline in net profit](#) this week and forecast that the smartphone market will likely continue to be pressured into next year.

Across tech, companies are moving aggressively to slash costs and preparing employees for lean times ahead.

During a companywide meeting Thursday, Google CEO Sundar Pichai told employees the company had grown too fast and needed to be more responsible with spending, according to people who heard the remarks.

"We are working very hard to make sure that current profitability is not the new normal," Amazon's chief financial officer, Brian Olsavsky, said after the company's quarterly results.

Amazon has moved to subleasing millions of square feet of warehouse space and paused hiring among some of its teams. "We are going to be very careful on our hiring," Mr. Olsavsky said during a call with reporters Thursday. "We certainly are looking at our cost structure and looking for areas where we can save money."

Intel said Thursday that it plans to deliver \$3 billion in cost reductions in 2023 and \$8 billion to \$10 billion in annualized savings from 2025. The company is embarking on job cuts and considering some divestitures to deal with economic conditions, Mr. Gelsinger said.

Meta's [Mark Zuckerberg](#) said the social-media giant's workforce of 87,000-plus employees could be smaller next year. The company also has said it is rationalizing office space.

Tech executives signaled they are keenly aware just how rising prices and economic upheaval are pressuring consumer and company wallets. Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella, on an earnings call, touted the ability of the company's Edge web browser to save consumers money. People are using the browser's coupon and price comparison features to save money, he said.

He and Google counterpart Mr. Pichai both said their tech tools could help businesses save money. “We’re helping them understand demand, deal with inventory challenges, increase loyalty, and much more,” Mr. Pichai said.

Compounding those issues for some tech giants is the massive disruption that has unfolded over the past year in the digital ad market. Changes Apple introduced last year to ad tracking as well as recession-driven spending cuts have weighed heavily on digital-ad based companies.

Alphabet this week reported the first-ever drop in YouTube year-over-year ad sales. Meta posted its second consecutive decline in revenue. A steep selloff in its shares [brought its market cap down to 2016 levels](#).

Not everything is getting pummeled. Texas Instruments said the automotive sector is the only area that held strong in the quarter. Less clear, though, is how long it may be before car demand also slumps.

“We’re not really trying to worry about when that will happen,” Texas Instruments’s Mr. Pahl said.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 DeFi platform hacked: \$14.5M stolen
SOURCE	https://therecord.media/defi-platform-robbed-of-nearly-15-million-in-hack/
GIST	<p>Decentralized finance platform Team Finance confirmed on Thursday that hackers exploited a vulnerability and stole \$14.5 million worth of cryptocurrency.</p> <p>Several blockchain security companies alerted the company of the hack before it released a statement about the issue.</p> <p>“We have just been alerted of an exploit on Team Finance. We are currently unsure of the details. We urge the exploiter to get in contact with us for a bounty payment. We are working to analyze and remedy the situation at this very moment,” the company said.</p> <p>“\$14.5M USD of tokens were exploited through the audited v2 to v3 migration function. We have temporarily paused all activity through team finance until we are certain this exploit has been remedied. All funds currently on Team Finance are not at further risk of this exploit.”</p> <p>Team Finance calls itself a “security toolkit for founders that want to create a token and raise money from a community of investors.” The platform says it has secured \$3 billion in cryptocurrency across 12 different blockchains since it was founded in 2020.</p> <p>As backlash toward the platform grew online, the company took to Twitter to defend itself, writing that it was “deeply sorry” for the incident.</p> <p>“We have multiple audits on each and every smart contract by reputable audit companies, and re-audit all new deployments. Actively looking into the exploit, and hopeful to get the funds back. We’ll keep everyone updated by the minute,” they said.</p> <p>Blockchain security companies PeckShield, SlowMist and BlockSec broke down the specifics of the attack, with each noting that a problem with Team Finance’s code was the source of the issue.</p> <p>The attack comes eight days after \$8 million was stolen from Moola Market and two weeks after Mango Markets had more than \$100 million stolen from its platform.</p> <p>Nearly \$2 billion worth of cryptocurrency has been stolen in 13 cross-chain bridge attacks, mostly in 2022, according to the blockchain research company Chainalysis, with more than \$100 million stolen from companies like Binance, Ronin Network, Harmony and Wormhole.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/27 Be mindful of Russia meddling in midterms
SOURCE	https://www.cyberscoop.com/russian-election-meddling/
GIST	<p>The midterms are less than two weeks away and in addition to Chinese influence operations, Russia is unlikely to sit this one out, either.</p> <p>Considering the Russian President Vladimir Putin’s threats against the West, it is unlikely that Moscow will waive an opportunity to undermine the U.S. during this election season. A combination of cyber operations, more disruptive cyberattacks in coordination with alleged hackers and disinformation spread through official accounts are among the activities Russia could aim at the U.S.</p> <p>The issue that currently matters the most to Moscow is the growing political division in the U.S. regarding the war in Ukraine. A likely Russian campaign could seek to bolster Republican candidates who are raising more questions about Washington’s political and financial support for Kyiv.</p> <p>Of course, the record shows the Russian government has exploited previous elections to stoke social instability and spread conspiracies to further polarize an already divided U.S. population. Although Putin’s regime is doubling down on its woefully mismanaged Ukrainian invasion, FBI Director Christopher Wray’s statement on potential Russian interference in the U.S. elections should be front and center — “the Russians can walk and chew gum.”</p> <p>As relations with Russia continue deteriorating, Moscow has repeatedly threatened to retaliate against Washington for its support for Kyiv. Russia, however, is unlikely to fight the U.S. with planes, tanks or missiles. Instead, it will aim to strike the U.S. at the heart of its democratic values with trolls and hackers, targeting critical vulnerabilities in IT networks and attempting to manipulate the minds of U.S. citizens.</p> <p>Russian interference was a distant concern for Washington until the 2016 elections, when Russia hacked the Democratic National Committee and released data illicitly obtained from targeted networks and personal emails. The information made public through this hack-and-leak operation, spread through Western and Russian-state sponsored media, and was used to amplify narratives on both political extremes in conjunction with disinformation campaigns and strategic messaging. The leaked documents eroded Hillary Clinton’s credibility, led to the resignation of DNC chair Debbie Schultz, and bolstered the perception of Russia as a formidable opponent capable of weakening Washington.</p> <p>Russia is likely to continue exploiting U.S. elections, especially as political partisanship intensifies, to further polarize and incite violence. To Russia, the priority is not necessarily to push the electorate to choose one candidate over the other as it is to show that U.S. democracy is flawed, corrupt and dysfunctional. Such a bleak picture of the West suggests that Russia’s authoritarian regime is not that much worse.</p> <p>While Russia’s cyber operations around previous U.S. elections were focused on compromising the confidentiality of data, Russia’s recent disruptive cyber operations against Ukraine, Estonia, Latvia, and the U.S. suggest future operations against U.S. election targets may also be disruptive. As Moscow desperately tries to score a win and prove the dysfunction of U.S. democracy, cyber operations may be among the Kremlin’s options.</p> <p>In addition, Russian military intelligence hackers are now known to conduct operations in coordination with so-called hackers. The state-supported hackers breached targets’ networks in Ukraine and deployed wiper malware, while hackers leaked data likely stolen from the targets. This creative mix of disruption and diffusion of data, conducted by state and non-state actors, can be applied against U.S. election targets.</p> <p>Since the war in Ukraine, Russia’s disinformation tactics have also evolved. As Western countries banned Russia’s state-sponsored media channels, Moscow capitalized on spreading disinformation through fake accounts and websites. The Kremlin also increasingly relies on social media accounts of Russian embassies and Russian officials to amplify pro-Kremlin narratives, even from fake accounts.</p>

	<p>Another tactic observed in Ukraine is the hacking of legitimate Ukrainian military social media accounts and using the accounts to call on soldiers to surrender. Such hack-and-demoralize operations can be applied during the U.S. elections to take over legitimate accounts of political candidates and spread fake messages about election fraud or other divisive content.</p> <p>Russia's fake personas and disinformation have triggered protests and can do so again. In July, the Justice Department unsealed an indictment against Moscow-based Aleksandr Ionov who recruited U.S. political groups in Florida, Georgia and California to spread propaganda, interfere in U.S. elections and organize demonstrations aimed to incite violence. Ionov funded these groups and coordinated protests at California's capital building in Sacramento, even instructing protesters to enter the building. Russia has previously sponsored protests in the U.S., Montenegro, Estonia, and elsewhere.</p> <p>Most importantly, the election season is only one opportunity for the Kremlin to strike a perceived moral victory over U.S. democracy. The post-election grievances, especially the next presidential race in 2024 and its aftermath, will provide another rich opportunity.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/28 Cranefly has new intel-gathering tool
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/analysis/threat-intelligence/burgeoning-cranefly-hacking-group-has-a-new-intel-gathering-tool
GIST	<p>An undocumented dropper uses a new technique of reading commands from Internet Information Services (IIS) logs to carry out intelligence gathering and deliver backdoors, according to Symantec.</p> <p>Symantec's blog post noted that the dropper, Trojan.Geppei, is linked to a threat actor Symantec calls Cranefly (aka UNC3524) to install undocumented malware and tools. Cranefly is a hacking group that targets corporate networks to steal emails from employees that deal with larger financial transactions, such as mergers and acquisitions.</p> <p>"We have never seen this technique used to date in real-world attacks. It could, in theory, be used to deliver different types of malware if leveraged by threat actors with different goals," Brigid O Gorman, senior intelligence analyst at Symantec threat hunter team, told SC Media.</p> <p>During the malicious activity, the dropper reads commands from a legitimate IIS log, which is meant to record data from IIS, including web pages and apps.</p> <p>"The attackers can send commands to a compromised web server by disguising them as web access requests. IIS logs them as normal, but the dropper can read them as commands if they contain the strings Wrde, Exco, or Cllo, which do not normally appear in IIS log files," Gorman explained.</p> <p>"These appear to be used for malicious HTTP request parsing by Geppei; the presence of these strings prompts the dropper to carry out activity on a machine," the post added.</p> <p>Hacktool.Regeorg is a backdoor that is used by the dropper, and the code is accessible to the public on GitHub.</p> <p>Therefore, although it has been previously adopted by many APT groups, its use provides no hints for attribution, and Symantec cannot connect this activity to any groups besides UNC3524.</p> <p>The dropper also deploys a previously unseen malware known as Trojan.Danfuan. Based on .NET dynamic compilation technology, it is a DynamicCodeCompiler that compiles and executes received C# code and acts as a backdoor on compromised systems.</p> <p>Researchers highlighted that the use of new techniques and custom tools indicates that Cranefly is "a fairly skilled threat actor." Mandiant, which first uncovered the group in December 2019, said that while their</p>

	<p>targets of corporate transactions hint at financial motivation, their longer-than-average dwell time of 21 days in 2021 suggests there could also be an espionage mandate.</p> <p>Symantec's findings drew a similar conclusion. "While we do not see data being exfiltrated from victim machines, the tools deployed and efforts taken to conceal this activity indicate that the most likely motivation for this group is intelligence gathering," the post noted.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/28 Slovak, Polish parliaments in cyberattacks
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/slovak-polish-parliaments-hit-cyberattacks
GIST	<p>Cyberattacks hit the Slovak and Polish parliaments on Thursday, bringing down the voting system in Slovakia's legislature, parliamentary authorities said.</p> <p>"The attack was multi-directional, including from inside the Russian Federation," the Polish Senate said in a statement.</p> <p>Polish Senate speaker Tomasz Grodzki said it may be linked to the Senate's vote Wednesday declaring the Russian government a "terrorist regime".</p> <p>The Slovak parliament's deputy speaker Gabor Grendel told AFP: that "Parliament's entire computer network has been paralysed".</p> <p>"Around 11 am (0900 GMT), we were about to vote when the head of our administrative department informed us there has been a cyberattack on the IT system of the parliament," he said.</p> <p>"Therefore, the parliamentary session was interrupted," he added.</p> <p>According to the lawmaker, all computers and phone lines went down, making it impossible for lawmakers to vote on several bills.</p> <p>"We have not identified the source of this problem, our technicians are solving it," Slovak parliamentary speaker Boris Kollar said.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/28 DHS baseline cybersecurity goals
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/dhs-develops-baseline-cybersecurity-goals-critical-infrastructure
GIST	<p>The DHS on Thursday announced Cybersecurity Performance Goals (CPGs) to help organizations — particularly in critical infrastructure sectors — prioritize cybersecurity investments and address critical risks.</p> <p>The CPGs were developed by the DHS's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) in collaboration with NIST based on feedback from partners in public and private sectors.</p> <p>They are a result of the White House's efforts to improve the US's cybersecurity, and the DHS says the goals are unique in that they address risk not only to individual entities, but also the aggregate risk to the nation.</p> <p>CPGs are a set of cross-sector recommendations that can be highly useful to an organization in securing its systems, but they are voluntary — organizations are not required by the government to use them. They are designed to complement NIST's Cybersecurity Framework.</p> <p>CPGs are described as baseline cybersecurity performance goals focusing on a prioritized subset of IT and OT security practices that can help organizations significantly reduce the likelihood and impact of risks and adversary techniques. In addition, they can serve as a benchmark for measuring and improving cybersecurity maturity.</p>

CPG categories include account security, device security, data security, governance and training, vulnerability management, supply chain / third party, and response and recovery.

These categories cover detection of unsuccessful login attempts, password-related issues, MFA, identity and access management, hardware and software approval processes, disabling macros, asset inventories, device configurations, mitigating risks associated with unauthorized devices, logging, and sensitive data protection.

They also cover cybersecurity leadership, training, mitigating known vulnerabilities, deploying security.txt files, addressing internet exposure risks, third-party validation of cybersecurity control effectiveness, vendor security requirements, supply chain incident reporting, incident response plans, and system backups.

Organizations have been provided a checklist that can be used to prioritize goals based on cost, complexity and impact. CISA has also set up a page on GitHub where organizations can [submit feedback](#).

While industry professionals applaud the initiative, some have pointed out some issues. Ron Fabela, CTO and co-founder at SynSaber, noted that the CPGs come with some challenges specific to OT systems.

“Top down guidance from CISA or other agencies are often hard to apply and measure across such large and diverse critical infrastructure sectors. Difficult to measure criteria for success are left to those doing the measurement. There's also the tension between performance based goals that are not overly prescriptive (as they should be) and guidance that is non-applicable to the audience,” Fabela said.

“Even within this report and checklist asset owners are left analyzing what is applicable and feasible. Many of the goals have unique callouts for ‘OT’ and plenty of caveats such as ‘where technically feasible’, a phrase that has been the bane of effective cybersecurity governance of ICS,” he added.

Chris Gray, AVP of cybersecurity at Deepwatch, noted that while the CPGs are a subset of the controls present in NIST’s Cybersecurity Framework, they can still be useful.

“There is little new here other than some additional classification around IT/OT and saving the agency/group/service from having to go through the process of selecting and prioritizing controls. That is absolutely a help. Some might view it as an ‘easy button’ or ‘lazy’, but in industries where there may not be a lot of security expertise, any help is good help. In addition, these controls SHOULD help establish a minimum baseline of expected activities,” Gray said.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/28 Cloud, hybrid working security concerns
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/cloud-hybrid-working-security/
GIST	<p>Concerns among global technology leaders about the security of cloud, datacenter and hybrid working environments have increased significantly over the past year, according to a new paper from the IEEE.</p> <p>The professional body polled 350 CIOs, CTOs, IT directors and other technology leaders in the US, UK, China, India and Brazil to compile its pending report, <i>The Impact of Technology in 2023 and Beyond: an IEEE Global Study</i>.</p> <p>Respondents came from organizations with more than 1000 employees across multiple industry sectors, including financial services, consumer goods, education, electronics, engineering, energy, government, healthcare, retail, technology and telecommunications.</p> <p>The number voicing concerns about cloud vulnerabilities increased significantly from a year ago. Some 51% highlighted them as a potential threat for 2023, versus 35% in 2022.</p>

This could theoretically include a range of potential cyber risks including misconfigured systems, insecure APIs, insecure development processes and system vulnerabilities, among others.

Misconfiguration was the number one cause of cloud security incidents in 2021, according to a [Check Point study](#) from earlier this year.

As the push for digital transformation continues, more organizations are investing in multiple public clouds, which could lead to further complexity and increased potential for data exposure. Last year, [an estimated](#) 92% of enterprises had a multi-cloud strategy while 80% said they're planning hybrid cloud deployments.

The second ranking security concern on the IEEE study was the mobile and hybrid workforce, which was cited by 46% of respondents, up from 39% a year earlier.

This is also an understandable worry, with [58% of Americans](#) working from home at least one day per week. The risk is that organizations fail to update security policies from the pre-COVID era to take account of the new reality of a permanently distributed workforce.

The third most commonly cited security concern for 2023 was datacenter vulnerabilities (43%), up from 27% a year ago.

[A new blog](#) from the IEEE highlights homomorphic encryption and blockchain technology as two areas of innovation to look out for in the cybersecurity space in 2023.

A third of respondents claimed that securing IoT-based machine-to-machine interactions will be the most important use of blockchain technology next year.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 Fodcha DDoS botnet injects ransoms
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/fodcha-ddos-botnet-reaches-1tbps-in-power-injects-ransoms-in-packets/
GIST	<p>A new version of the Fodcha DDoS botnet has emerged, featuring ransom demands injected into packets and new features to evade detection of its infrastructure.</p> <p>360Netlab researchers discovered Fodcha in April 2022, and since then, it has been silently receiving development and upgrades, steadily improving and becoming a more potent threat.</p> <p>According to a new report published by the same researchers, the latest Fodcha version 4 has grown to an unprecedented scale, with its developers taking measures to prevent analysis after Netlab's last report.</p> <p>The most notable improvement in this botnet version is the delivery of ransom demands directly within DDoS packets used against victims' networks.</p> <p>In addition, the botnet now uses encryption to establish communication with the C2 server, making it harder for security researchers to analyze the malware and potentially take down its infrastructure.</p> <p>More DDoS power</p> <p>As a DDoS operation, Fodcha had grown significantly since April, when it targeted an average of 100 victims daily. The average number of targets has increased by ten times, reaching 1,000 daily.</p> <p>The botnet now relies on 42 C2 domains to operate 60,000 active bot nodes daily, generating up to 1Tbps of destructive traffic.</p> <p>According to Netlab, Fodcha reached a new peak on October 11, 2022, attacking 1,396 targets in a single day.</p>

Some notable examples of confirmed attacks of Fodcha include:

- A DDoS attack against a healthcare organization on June 7 and 8, 2022.
- A DDoS attack against the communication infrastructure of a company in September 2022.
- A 1Tbps DDoS attack against a well-known cloud service provider on September 21, 2022.

Most of Fodcha's targets are located in China and the United States, but the botnet's reach is already global, having infected systems in Europe, Australia, Japan, Russia, Brazil, and Canada.

Embedding ransom demands

Netlab's analysts believe Fodcha is making money by renting its firepower to other threat actors who wish to launch DDoS attacks. However, the latest version also includes extortion by demanding a Monero ransom to stop the attacks.

Based on DDoS packets deciphered by Netlab, Fodcha now demands the payment of 10 XMR (Monero) from victims, worth approximately \$1,500.

These demands are embedded in the 'Data' portion of the botnet's DDoS packets and warn that the attacks will continue unless a payment is made.

However, as Monero is a privacy coin, it is much harder to trace. Therefore, it is not offered for sale by almost all US crypto exchanges due to the legal requirements to prevent money laundering or other illicit activity.

Therefore, while ransomware gangs and other threat actors commonly request XMR as a payment option, almost all companies choose to pay in bitcoin, which will likely be a similar situation with DDoS attacks.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 Threat actors target Instagram users
SOURCE	https://www.darkreading.com/application-security/cyberttackers-target-instagram-users-threats-copyright-infringement
GIST	<p>Threat actors are targeting Instagram users in a new phishing campaign that uses URL redirection to take over accounts, or steal sensitive information that can be used in future attacks or be sold on the Dark Web.</p> <p>As a lure, the campaign uses a suggestion that users may be committing copyright infringement — a great concern among social media influencers, businesses, and even the average account holder on Instagram, researchers from Trustwave SpiderLabs revealed in an analysis shared with Dark Reading on Oct. 27.</p> <p>This type of "infringement phishing" was also seen earlier this year, in a separate campaign targeting users of Facebook — a brand also under Instagram parent company Meta — with emails suggesting users had violated community standards, the researchers said.</p> <p>"This theme is not new, and we have seen it from time to time over the last year," Homer Pacag, Trustwave SpiderLabs security researcher, wrote in the post. "It's the same copyright infringement trickery again, but this time, the attackers gain more personal information from their victims and use evasion techniques to hide phishing URLs."</p> <p>That evasion comes in the form of URL redirection, an emerging tactic among threat actors who are evolving their phishing techniques to be sneakier and more evasive as internet users get more savvy.</p> <p>Instead of attaching a malicious file that a user must click on to reach a phishing page — something that many people already know seems suspicious — URL redirection includes in a message an embedded URL that appears legitimate but which ultimately leads to a malicious page that steals credentials instead.</p> <p>Bogus Copyright Report</p>

The Instagram campaign that researchers discovered begins with an email to a user notifying him or her that complaints were received about the account infringing upon copyright, and that an appeal to Instagram is necessary if the user doesn't want to lose the account.

Anyone can file a [copyright report](#) with Instagram if the account owner discovers that their photos and videos are being used by other Instagram users — something that happens often on the social media platform. Attackers in the campaign are taking advantage of this to try to trick victims into giving away their user credentials and personal information, Pacag wrote.

The phishing emails include a button with a link to an "appeals form," informing users they can click the link to fill out the form and later will be contacted by an Instagram representative.

Researchers analyzed the email in a text editor and found that, rather than directing users to the Instagram site to fill out a legitimate report, it employs URL redirection. Specifically, the link uses a URL rewrite or redirector to a site owned by WhatsApp — `hxxps://l[.]wl[.]co/l?u=` — followed by the true phishing URL — `hxxps://helperlivesback[.]jml/5372823` — found in the query part of the URL, Pacag explained.

"This is an increasingly common phishing trick, using legitimate domains to redirect to other URLs in this fashion," he wrote.

If a user clicks on the button, it opens his or her default browser and redirects the user to the intended phishing page, going through a few steps ultimately to steal user and password data if the victim follows through, the researchers said.

Step-by-Step Data Harvesting

First, if the victim enters his or her username, the data is sent to the server via the form "POST" parameters, the researchers said. A user is prompted to click a "Continue" button, and if this is done, the page displays the typed username, now prefixed with the typical "@" symbol used to signify an Instagram username. Then the page asks for a password, which, if entered, also is sent to the attacker-controlled server, the researchers said.

It's at this point in the attack where things deviate slightly from a typical phishing page, which is usually satisfied once a person enters their username and password into the appropriate fields, Pacag said.

The attackers in the Instagram campaign don't stop at this step; instead, they ask the user to type in his or her password once more and then fill in a question field asking in which city the person lives. This data, like the rest, also is sent back to the server via "POST," Pacag explained.

The last step prompts the user to fill in his or her telephone number, which presumably attackers can use to get past two-factor authentication (2FA) if it's enabled on an Instagram account, the researchers said. Attackers also can sell this info on the Dark Web, in which case it can be used for future scams that initiate via telephone calls, they noted.

Once all of this personal info is harvested by attackers, the victim is finally redirected to Instagram's actual help page and the beginning of the authentic copyright reporting process used to initiate the scam.

Detecting Novel Phishing Tactics

With URL redirection and other [more evasive tactics](#) being taken by threat actors in phishing campaigns, it's getting harder to detect — for both email security solutions and users alike — which emails are legitimate and which are the product of malicious intent, the researchers said.

"It can be difficult for most URL detection systems to identify this deceptive practice, as the intended phishing URLs are embedded mostly in the URL query parameters," Pacag said.

	<p>Until technology catches up with the constantly changing tactics of phishers, email users themselves — especially in a corporate setting — need to maintain a higher degree of alert when it comes to messages that appear suspicious in any way to avoid being fooled, the researchers said.</p> <p>Ways users can do this are by checking that URLs included in messages match the legitimate ones of the company or service that claims to be sending them; only clicking on links in emails that come from trusted users with whom people have communicated with previously; and checking with IT support before clicking on any embedded or attached link in an email.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	10/27 Raspberry Robin cyber-worm operation
SOURCE	https://www.darkreading.com/threat-intelligence/raspberry-robin-cyber-worm-infected-thousands-endpoints
GIST	<p>The Raspberry Robin cyber-worm operation has infected nearly 3,000 devices in almost 1,000 organizations in the last 30 days, according to Microsoft telemetry — and the threat seems to be molting into something new.</p> <p>Raspberry Robin was initially spotted back in May, infecting targets via infected USB drives and worming to other endpoints — but then remaining dormant. That changed in July, when Microsoft security researchers saw Raspberry Robin importing the FakeUpdates malware to devices where it was nesting. Further exploration of the activity revealed some infrastructure overlaps with the infamous Dridex Trojan and the Evil Corp (aka DEV-0243) ransomware gang.</p> <p>Since then, Raspberry Robin has also started deploying IcedID, Bumblebee, and Truebot, according to a Microsoft update on Oct. 27, with researchers uncovering a notable spate of attacks in October that have resulted in Clon ransomware infections. The threat has also taken flight beyond its initial USB access vector, researchers noted, and is now capable of using at least four different methods for gaining purchase on devices.</p> <p>The computing giant attributes the post-compromise Clon activity to a group it tracks as DEV-0950 -- aka FIN11 or TA505 -- indicating that Raspberry Robin is establishing itself in the wider cybercrime economy.</p> <p>"DEV-0950 traditionally uses phishing to acquire the majority of their victims, so this notable shift to using Raspberry Robin enables them to deliver payloads to existing infections and move their campaigns more quickly to ransomware stages," Microsoft researchers noted.</p> <p>They added, "Given the interconnected nature of the cybercriminal economy, it's possible that the actors behind these Raspberry Robin-related malware campaigns — usually distributed through other means like malicious ads or email — are paying the Raspberry Robin operators for malware installs."</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	10/27 Prepare now for critical flaw in OpenSSL?
SOURCE	https://www.darkreading.com/vulnerabilities-threats/prepare-critical-flaw-openssl-security-experts-warn
GIST	<p>Organizations have five days to prepare for what the OpenSSL Project on Oct. 26 described as a "critical" vulnerability in versions 3.0 and above of the nearly ubiquitously used cryptographic library for encrypting communications on the Internet.</p> <p>On Tuesday, Nov. 1, the project will release a new version of OpenSSL (version 3.0.7) that will patch an as-yet-undisclosed flaw in current versions of the technology. The characteristics of the vulnerability and ease with which it can be exploited will determine the speed with which organizations will need to address the issue.</p> <p>Potentially Huge Implications</p> <p>Major operating system vendors, software publishers, email providers, and technology companies that have integrated OpenSSL into their products and services will likely have updated versions of their</p>

technologies timed for release with the OpenSSL Project's disclosure of the flaw next Tuesday. But that will still leave potentially millions of others — including federal agencies, private companies, service providers, network device manufacturers, and countless website operators — with a looming deadline to find and fix the vulnerability before threat actors begin to exploit it.

If the new vulnerability turns out to be another Heartbleed bug — the last critical vulnerability to impact OpenSSL — organizations and indeed the entire industry are going to be under the gun to address the issue as quickly as possible.

The Heartbleed vulnerability (CVE-2014-0160), disclosed in 2014, basically gave attackers a way to [eavesdrop on Internet communications, steal data](#) from services and users, to impersonate services, and do all this with little trace of their ever having done any of it. The bug existed in OpenSSL versions from March 2012 onward and affected a dizzying range of technologies, including widely used Web servers such as Nginx, Apache, and IIS; organizations such as [Google, Akamai, CloudFlare, and Facebook](#); email and chat servers; network appliances from companies such as Cisco; and VPNs.

The disclosure of the bug triggered a frenzy of remedial activity across the industry and sparked concerns of major compromises. As Synopsys' Heartbleed.com site noted, Apache and Nginx alone accounted for a market share of over 66% of active sites on the Internet at the time Heartbleed was disclosed.

There's no telling, until Tuesday at least, if the new flaw will be anything like Heartbleed. But given the almost critical-infrastructure-like use of OpenSSL for encryption across the Internet, organizations would do well not to underestimate the threat, security experts said this week.

Security Orgs Should Brace for Impact

"It is a bit difficult to speculate about the impact, but past experience has shown that OpenSSL doesn't use the label 'critical' lightly," says Johannes Ullrich, dean of research at the SANS Institute.

OpenSSL itself defines a critical flaw as one that [enables significant disclosure of the contents of server memory](#) and potential user details, vulnerabilities that can be exploited easily and remotely to compromise server private keys.

Version 3.0, the current release of OpenSSL, is used in many current operating systems, such as Ubuntu 22.04 LTS and MacOS Mavericks and Ventura, Ullrich notes. Organizations can expect to receive Linux patches quickly and likely at the same time as the OpenSSL bulletin on Tuesday. But organizations should get ready now, finding out which systems use OpenSSL 3.0, Ullrich says. "After Heartbleed, OpenSSL introduced these preannouncements of security patches," he says. "They are supposed to help organizations prepare. So, use this time to find out what will need patching."

Brian Fox, co-founder and CTO at Sonatype, says that by the time the OpenSSL Project discloses the bug Tuesday, organizations need to identify if they are using a vulnerable version anywhere in their technology portfolio, which applications are using it, and how long it would take for them to remediate the issue.

"Potential reach is always the most consequential piece of any major flaw," Fox notes. "In this instance, the largest challenge with updating OpenSSL is that often this usage is embedded inside of other devices." In these instances, it can be hard to assess exposure without asking the upstream provider of the technology, he adds.

Anything that communicates with the Internet securely could potentially have OpenSSL built in to it. And it's not just software that can be affected but hardware as well. The advance notice that the OpenSSL Project provided should give organizations time to prepare. "Finding what pieces of software or devices is the first step. Organizations should do that now, and then patching or sourcing updates from the upstream vendors will follow," Fox says. "All you can do at the moment is inventory."

An Entire Ecosystem Might Need to Update

A lot will also depend on how vendors of products with vulnerable versions of OpenSSL embedded in them respond to the disclosure. The OpenSSL Project's release of the new version on Tuesday is only the first step. "An entire ecosystem of applications built with OpenSSL will also have to update their code, release their own updates, and organizations will need to apply them," says John Bambenek, principal threat hunter at Netenrich.

Ideally, organizations that have dealt with Heartbleed will have an idea of where their OpenSSL installs are and which of their vendor products will require an update as well. "This is why software bills of materials can be important," Bambenek says. "They can take this time to reach out and understand their suppliers and vendors plans for updates to make sure those updates are applied as well." One likely issue that organizations need to be prepared for is how to deal with end-of-life products for which updates are not available, he adds.

Mike Parkin, senior technical engineer at Vulcan Cyber, says that without evidence of exploit activity and associated indicators of compromise, it is best that organizations follow their normal change management process for when a known update is on the way. "On the security side, it's worth putting some additional focus on systems that might be affected if an exploit emerges before the new release drops," he advises.

There's not enough information in OpenSSL Project's announcement to say how much work will be involved in the upgrade, "but unless it requires updating certificates, the upgrade will probably be straightforward," Parkin predicts.

Also on Nov. 1, the OpenSSL project will release OpenSSL version 1.1.1s, which it described as a "bug-fix release." Version 1.1.1, which it replaces, is not susceptible to the CVE that is being fixed in 3.0, the project noted.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 Twilio discloses another hack from June
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/twilio-discloses-another-hack-from-june-blames-voice-phishing/?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>Cloud communications company Twilio disclosed a new data breach stemming from a June 2022 security incident where the same attackers behind the August hack accessed some customers' information.</p> <p>Twilio says this was a "brief security incident" on June 29. The attacker used social engineering to trick an employee into handing over their credentials in a voice phishing attack.</p> <p>The stolen credentials were then used "to access customer contact information for a limited number of customers."</p> <p>"The threat actor's access was identified and eradicated within 12 hours. Customers whose information was impacted by the June Incident were notified on July 2, 2022," the company revealed on Thursday.</p> <p>209 customers affected by the August breach</p> <p>Twilio also shared that hackers behind the August breach had accessed the data of 209 customers and 93 Authy end users after breaching some internal non-production systems using employee credentials stolen in an SMS phishing attack.</p> <p>"209 customers – out of a total customer base of over 270,000 – and 93 Authy end users – out of approximately 75 million total users – had accounts that were impacted by the incident," Twilio said.</p> <p>After concluding the incident investigation, Twilio also found no evidence that any of its customers' console account credentials, API keys, or authentication tokens were also accessed.</p> <p>While the company disclosed the incident on August 7, it now revealed the attackers maintained access to this environment for two more days.</p>

"The last observed unauthorized activity in our environment was on August 9, 2022," the company added.

Large-scale coordinated SMS phishing campaign

As Twilio said after the August incident, the attackers [gained access to its network](#) using employee credentials stolen in an SMS phishing attack.

Once inside Twilio's systems, the hackers accessed customer data [using administrative portals](#), [accessed Authy 2FA accounts and codes](#), and registered their own devices to obtain temporary tokens.

The Twilio data breach is part of a more extensive campaign from a threat actor tracked as [Scatter Swine](#) or [Oktapus](#) that targeted at least 130 organizations, including [MailChimp](#), [Klaviyo](#), and [Cloudflare](#).

Cloudflare, which also disclosed that its employees had their credentials stolen in a similar SMS phishing attack, said [the attackers failed to breach its systems](#) after having their login attempts blocked by company-issued FIDO2-compliant hardware security keys.

As a result of the June and August breaches, Twilio says it reset the credentials of the compromised employee user accounts and is distributing FIDO2 tokens to all employees.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 Retail stores more vulnerable to cybercrime
SOURCE	https://www.darkreading.com/physical-security/why-retail-stores-are-more-vulnerable-than-ever-to-cybercrime?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>Figures from SonicWall's Biannual Report revealed that e-commerce and online retail businesses saw a 264% surge in the past 12 months in ransomware attacks alone. These kinds of statistics are extremely worrying for retail businesses, so it is unsurprising that websites and digital security are at the forefront of retailers' minds.</p> <p>However, for those retailers that have a physical store as well as an online presence, there might be an assumption that the cybersecurity in-store doesn't need to be considered as a top priority. Well, doing so could be a big mistake.</p> <p>In this article, we take a look at why retail stores are more vulnerable to cybercrime than ever before.</p> <p>Security Is Weaker</p> <p>There can be no doubt that one of the major issues around security in-store is the issue of complacency. It is assumed that physical stores themselves are unlikely to be targeted by cybercriminals — surely it is more likely that they will put their resources into using hacking or phishing?</p> <p>In reality, cybercriminals are always looking for ways to maximize their time — they want quick wins. Increasingly, as retail stores are less well protected they are being seen as an easy way into the computer system of a company.</p> <p>Perhaps the lesson that needs to be learned here is that you should never assume that you won't or can't be attacked.</p> <p>Cybercriminals are far more sophisticated than they've ever been. If there are gaps in security, they can identify and tap into them. Retailers, for instance, need to balance consumers' privacy and data protection with their own tight security measures that protect their internal IT systems and physical stores. Failure to install security effectively and comply can result in firms facing fines for breaches in privacy laws under stringent CCTV regulations and GDPR guidelines.</p> <p>Stores and Websites Are Intrinsically Linked</p>

You might think that there is a divide inside your business: your physical store and your online store. However, it is generally the case that your physical premises are linked to your digital system just as much as an office might be. Do you log in to your system at work? Do you track customers' details using an IT system?

For the majority of businesses, the physical store is actually just as dependent on your IT system as the site online. This presents a potential problem. If your physical retail store can potentially allow access to your whole IT system, cybercriminals can use nefarious methods in your physical premises.

The Rise of the Internet of Things

Physical stores are [increasingly reliant on Internet of Things devices](#) — that being any device that is connected to the Internet. This might include stock checkers, smart shelves, predictive maintenance equipment and much more.

Physical security devices such as CCTV, video surveillance, and alarm systems are often connected to the Internet and can also be a vulnerability for targeted cyberattacks. The [wider use of video surveillance technology](#) and other types of physical devices extends to more than pure crime detection. They have intelligent capabilities that can be applied to monitor crowds, secure physical sites, and support building management platforms.

Although such integrated systems do a good job in providing smart data to support security firms and facilities managers managing retail sites, any data, files and surveillance videos can be vulnerable to cyberattacks.

Whether stored or managed on cloud-based applications or as on-premise solutions, such physical security devices that protect retail stores also open up another potential entry point to your IT system that criminals can exploit. And, if CCTV, video surveillance and alarm systems are not managed properly, they can be a major problem.

The Invasion of Shadow IT

Shadow IT is the use of any kind of software or applications that aren't approved by the IT team. This is becoming a big problem, especially in stores where staff make use of personal devices as a part of their role.

"The popularity of shadow IT is partly due to its perceived benefits," [says George Glass](#), head of threat intelligence at cybersecurity specialists Redscan, "these include the ability to take initiative in setting up and using technology and the freedom to adopt systems and software more quickly in order to reduce workload. However, these apparent benefits come at a significant cost."

The issue arises when this shadow IT is not checked for vulnerabilities or is not kept up to date because it is not known by the IT team. These vulnerabilities and flaws can present a potential opening for cybercriminals.

Prioritizing Speed of Service Over Security

It is naturally the case that many businesses in retail want to prioritise fast and effective customer service. Unfortunately, this can ultimately result in good security practices being overlooked in favour of getting on with tasks. For example, if a customer comes in requesting a password reset on their account, there may be some pressure to simply go ahead with this rather than following the correct procedure.

Retail stores need to understand the interconnected nature of cybercriminals and in-person crime. With the rise in cashless retail and a surge in online sales (that has witnessed an unprecedented rise in recent years), retailers' IT security has had to keep in step and reposition itself with the evolution of consumers' buying habits. This increased awareness, however, has been reinforced by the [UK Government's measures to support security technology](#) within the retail industry.

	While retail stores are more vulnerable than ever to cybercrime, there is much that businesses can do to mitigate risk. Perhaps the most important factor is providing staff training to ensure that everyone understands their role in preventing cybercrime.
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/27 Drinik malware targets 18 India banks
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/drinik-android-malware-now-targets-users-of-18-indian-banks/?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>A new version of the Drinik Android trojan targets 18 Indian banks, masquerading as the country's official tax management app to steal victims' personal information and banking credentials.</p> <p>Drinik has been circulating in India since 2016, operating as an SMS stealer, but in September 2021, it added banking trojan features that target 27 financial institutes by directing victims to phishing pages.</p> <p>Analysts at Cyble have been following the malware and report that its developers have evolved it into a full Android banking trojan with screen recording, keylogging, abuse of Accessibility services, and the ability to perform overlay attacks.</p> <p>Stealing credentials from real sites The latest version of the malware comes in the form of an APK named 'iAssist,' which is supposedly India's Income Tax Department's official tax management tool.</p> <p>Upon installation, it requests permissions to receive, read, and send SMS, read the user's call log, and read and write to external storage.</p> <p>Next, it requests the user to allow the app to (ab)use the Accessibility Service. If granted, it disables Google Play Protect and uses it to perform navigation gestures, record the screen, and capture key presses.</p> <p>Eventually, the app loads the actual Indian income tax site via WebView instead of phishing pages like past variants and instead steals user credentials by recording the screen and using a keylogger.</p> <p>Drinik will also check if the victim ended up on a URL that indicates a successful login to ensure that the exfiltrated details (user ID, PAN, AADHAR) are valid.</p> <p>At this stage, the victim is served a fake dialogue box saying that the tax agency found they're eligible for a refund of Rs 57,100 (\$700) due to previous tax miscalculations and are invited to tap the "Apply" button to receive it.</p> <p>This action takes the victims to a phishing page that is a clone of the real Income Tax Department site, where they are directed to enter financial information, including account number, credit card number, CVV, and card PIN.</p> <p>To target the eighteen banks, Drinik constantly monitors the Accessibility Service for events related to the targeted banking apps, such as their apps.</p> <p>The targeted banks include SBI (State Bank of India), one of the largest banks in the world, serving 450,000,000 people via a massive network of 22,000 branches.</p> <p>If there's a match, the malware collects keylogging data that contain user credentials and siphons them to the C2 server.</p> <p>During this attack, Drinik abuses the "CallScreeningService" to disallow incoming calls that may interrupt the login and, by extension, the data-stealing process.</p> <p>Drinik evolving</p>

While Drinik isn't as sophisticated or advanced as other banking trojans, its authors appear determined to make it more powerful, constantly adding features that make it harder to detect.

Going after Indian taxpayers and banking customers means that Drinik has a massive targeting pool, so every new successful feature potentially translates to substantial financial gains for the malware's operators.

To avoid this threat, always avoid APK downloads from outside the Play Store and enable biometric authentication, such as 2FA, for logging in to e-banking portals.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/28 Customer service number? Could be scam
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2022/10/28/scam-customer-service-phone-number/
GIST	<p>When George Hart got an email saying there'd been fraudulent activity on his PayPal account, the 76-year-old knew better than to take the message's word for it.</p> <p>So he logged onto his PayPal account, and there the supposed charge was again: \$699.99 to a vendor he'd never heard of. An accompanying message said the charge would be posted to his account if he didn't call customer service in the next 24 hours. So he called the number in the message.</p> <p>The person he spoke with urged Hart to install an app called TeamViewer, he said. When he started seeing new windows flicker across his screen when he wasn't even touching the mouse, Hart bent down under his desk and pulled the computer's plug.</p> <p>It might have saved him from a more severe scam. The fraudster had used a PayPal money request to trick Hart into thinking a charge had been posted to his account, then pressured him into installing an app that grants remote access to a computer. Hart used anti-virus software to reset his computer and purge it of the malware the scammers installed, he said.</p> <p>Payment apps let you send money with the tap of a button. Unfortunately, that makes them fertile ground for scammers. This week, Help Desk heard from two readers who had run-ins with fraudsters on PayPal. Hart ended the interaction before the scammers could compromise any more of his accounts. Another person, 65-year-old Cynthia Parker from Columbia, Mo., lost around \$1,400 after speaking with a scammer posing as a PayPal customer service employee.</p> <p>PayPal ended up refunding Parker after being contacted by The Washington Post. But often once you send money on a payment app, it's gone.</p> <p>"We have strong controls in place to manage these well-known phishing scams and mitigate these types of incidents," PayPal said. "Nonetheless, we encourage customers to always be vigilant online and to contact customer service directly if they suspect they are a target of a scam."</p> <p>Here's what to look for if you get an unexpected receipt or invoice or find yourself on the phone with a sketchy "customer service rep."</p> <p>Get customer service numbers from official websites</p> <p>Treat every phone number like a potential scam risk. Even if the number came from an official-looking email or text, verify it by checking it against the contact number listed on the company's website before you call.</p> <p>Type in phone numbers rather than clicking links</p> <p>Online links can whisk you anywhere a bad actor wants you to go. Rather than rely on "call" buttons, find official customer service numbers and type them into your phone manually, advised Jérôme Segura, senior director of threat intelligence at cybersecurity company Malwarebytes. Double check that you typed it in correctly before you connect, since many scammers set up phone numbers one digit off from common help lines and then rely on "fat fingering," or lazy typing, to bring in victims, Segura said.</p>

Beware of sponsored search results

Just because a webpage or phone number turns up at the top of search engine results, that doesn't mean it's legitimate. [We've reported on](#) scams popping up in top results on Google, Bing and DuckDuckGo.

"Anybody can purchase an ad and pretend to be a given company," Segura said.

That's how Parker believes she ended up on the line with someone who ultimately compromised her PayPal account and stole money, she said. She typed "eBay customer service" into Google and called the first number that came up. When she told the person on the line that she needed to cancel a PayPal payment to an eBay vendor, they offered to connect her with PayPal support if she'd stay on the line. (Remember: Companies shouldn't be able to tap into another business's phone or payment systems.) Google has said it's combating ad fraud by beefing up its ad verification and scam detection.

Never download a remote-access tool

Unless you're working with a trusted colleague or IT professional, never install new apps or programs while on the phone with a purported customer support agent.

Both Hart and Parker were told they needed to download apps that granted remote access to their computers, they said. Apps like AnyDesk and TeamViewer are legitimate tools for support professionals, Segura said, but there are very few scenarios where a customer service agent legitimately needs remote access to your computer. At worst, these apps could help hackers break into bank accounts or steal other sensitive information. That's why this particular scam is helping fraudsters steal greater sums faster, he added.

If someone asks you to download an app or online tool, tell them you need to hang up and do some research, Segura said. Search the name of the app and make sure it doesn't grant remote access and isn't associated with scams. If the agent seems pushy or tries to keep you on the phone, that's cause for suspicion.

Remember that vendors can message you

On apps such as PayPal or Cash App, strangers can send you money requests. Keep in mind that, like in Hart's case, a money request doesn't mean a transaction is pending — it can only go through if you approve it.

Be wary of any email or message claiming you need to cancel a transaction, renew a subscription or inspect potential fraud. It's easy for bad actors to steal brand logos and other visual elements that make a fake email look real, Segura said. Never call a customer support number that comes in an email. Take a close look at the sender's email address, and if it looks real, contact the company directly by calling the number on its website.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 Cyberattack hits German energy supplier
SOURCE	https://therecord.media/major-german-energy-supplier-hit-by-cyberattack/
GIST	<p>Enercity, one of Germany's largest municipal energy suppliers, confirmed it was targeted by a cyberattack on Wednesday morning.</p> <p>The Hannover-based company said its security systems "reacted immediately" and that "greater damage to the company" has been averted.</p> <p>Enercity confirmed that it would continue supplying energy to customers, explaining its operational technology and critical infrastructure was not affected. "Our grids and power plants are stable and the security of supply is guaranteed," the company stated.</p>

However the attack has impacted customer service, which has limited availability. The company added: "Not all IT systems can currently be used to their full extent, which means that they may be minor restrictions."

The attack comes days after Germany's federal cybersecurity office [warned](#) that the threat situation facing the country was "higher than ever."

The energy sector in Germany has been repeatedly targeted by criminals in recent months.

Several cyber incidents preceding the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February affected the oil and chemical sector in the country — as well as in Germany's neighbors — provoking concerns that they were part of a criminal campaign coordinated by Russian intelligence.

A [Belgian official downplayed to The Record](#) concerns that the attacks were linked, however indictments against Russian cybercriminals such as [Maksim Yakubets](#) have alleged that Russia's Federal Security Service has at times turned to domestic cyber criminals for foreign operations.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 Elon Musk acquires Twitter
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Business/elon-musk-closes-deal-acquire-twitter-reports/story?id=92122221
GIST	<p>Tesla CEO Elon Musk reportedly closed a deal to acquire Twitter on Thursday, ending a monthslong saga that cast Musk as suitor, critic, legal adversary and ultimately owner of the social media platform.</p> <p>The Washington Post, The New York Times and Wall Street Journal were among the outlets to report the deal closure, citing sources familiar with the matter. ABC News has not confirmed.</p> <p>Later Thursday night, Musk tweeted, "The bird is freed."</p> <p>Musk -- the richest person in the world, according to Forbes -- reportedly acquired Twitter at his original offer price of \$54.20 a share at a total cost of roughly \$44 billion.</p> <p>On Wednesday, Musk posted a video of himself walking into Twitter's offices with a sink, with the tagline: "Entering Twitter HQ – let that sink in!"</p> <p>After initially reaching an acquisition deal with Twitter in April, Musk moved to terminate the agreement in July, citing concerns over spam accounts on the platform.</p> <p>Soon after, Twitter filed a lawsuit against Musk over his effort to nix the deal. The judge in the trial, set to take place in Delaware Chancery Court, gave Musk a deadline of Friday to reach a deal or proceed with the trial.</p> <p>The deal completes a courtship that started in January when the billionaire first invested in Twitter.</p> <p>By March, Musk had become the largest stakeholder in Twitter with the social media company announcing in April that Musk would join its board. Days later, however, Musk said he had decided against joining the board.</p> <p>In April, Musk offered to buy Twitter at \$54.20 per share, valuing the company at about \$44 billion. The offer amounted to a 38% premium above where the price stood a day before Musk's investment in Twitter became public. Roughly 10 days later, Twitter accepted Musk's offer.</p> <p>One month later, however, Musk said he had put the deal "temporarily on hold," citing concern over what he said was the prevalence of bot and spam accounts on the platform. Roughly two hours later, Musk said he was "still committed" to the deal.</p>

	<p>Twitter said it had provided Musk with information in accordance with conditions set out in the acquisition deal.</p> <p>Eventually, Musk moved to terminate the deal in July. Soon after, Twitter sued Musk in Chancery Court in Delaware to force him to complete the deal.</p> <p>A scheduling decision made by the court in July -- to hold the trial over five days in October -- appeared to align more closely with a timeline requested by Twitter, which had sought a four-day trial in September. Musk asked the court to set a trial date no earlier than mid-February 2023.</p> <p>Now, the court case is off and the deal is done.</p>
Return to Top	

Terrorism, Extremism

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	10/28 Jihadists increase content in Spanish
SOURCE	https://elamerican.com/jihadists-increase-content-in-spanish/
GIST	<p>Jihadist groups, such as the Islamic State, use Arabic, French and English regularly and without difficulty in their propaganda messages, but now their related organizations are reproducing these contents in Spanish to extend their networks in Latin America.</p> <p>It is a new situation that has been verified by the agents of the security forces of Spain, who are now focused on the fight against “online” radicalization, since although they are aware that the quality of the propaganda of the jihadists of the Daesh is falling, the radical contents continue to spread in social media, now also in Spanish.</p> <p>These are some of the concerns expressed this Thursday by Spanish counter-terrorism leaders at a conference organized by the Elcano Royal Institute on “Extremisms related to terrorism in the West: emerging and persistent challenges,” at which a report on the Muslim brotherhood in Spain was presented.</p> <p>The closing ceremony was conducted by the Spanish Secretary of State for Security, Rafael Pérez, who placed terrorism and radicalization among the priorities of the Spanish Presidency of the Council of the European Union, which Spain will assume in the second half of 2023.</p> <p>Also concerned about “the new modes of radicalization,” whose expansion must be “curbed”, Perez also insisted on “online” propaganda and recalled that in recent police actions, agents have managed to identify 1,124 user profiles that were dedicated to disseminating terrorist and extremist content.</p> <p>In these investigations, the Spanish security forces have located and removed 563 digital contents in 106 websites that served as a guide for the manufacture of explosives or for the preparation and execution of terrorist attacks.</p> <p>The chief colonel of the Special Central Unit (UCE) 2 of the Civil Guard, Francisco José Vázquez, stressed the need that these organizations have to reach the whole world and, hence, the greater use of Spanish in their propaganda on the internet.</p> <p>He acknowledged that the scrutiny of the networks to fight radicalization is the “daily headache” of the security forces, who carry out a huge activity to prevent the Internet from being the space where terrorists continue to manifest themselves.</p> <p>Regarding the “physical sphere,” Vázquez placed radicalization in prisons as the area of greatest concern, but highlighted the work of penitentiary institutions to prevent it, with programs that are serving as an example for other countries.</p>

	<p>The commissioner of the Spanish National Police, Manuel Rodríguez, made it clear that the security forces pursue crimes, not ideologies “however radical they may be,” and indicated that although not all radical behavior ends up in terrorism, he has yet not met any terrorist who had not been previously radicalized.</p> <p>Rodriguez did not want to minimize the current threat because it persists even though there have been no serious attacks. And he gave an example: Al Qaeda seems to be in a “dormant” state now, but “at any moment it can send tangible threats”.</p> <p>Nor did he rule out that the Sahel area, in North Africa, could become a sanctuary for fighters who want to go there for training, as was the case in Syria or Iraq.</p> <p>The commander of the Spanish National Police also addressed the problem of returning fighters, including some who return from the Balkans, making it more difficult to detect them when they enter through land borders than those who may do so in the precarious vessels known in Spain as pateras.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/27 Toronto 18 terrorist leader gets parole
SOURCE	https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/toronto-18-terrorist-leader-zakaria-amara-gets-parole
GIST	<p>Zakaria Amara, leader of an al-Qaida-inspired terrorist plot to explode truck bombs in Ontario in 2006, recently faced two days of interrogation by RCMP national security investigators to assess what threat he might still pose as he sought release on parole.</p> <p>The intense scrutiny of his radicalization and subsequent deradicalization while in prison for the past 17 years was his idea, one he hoped would fill a gap for the Parole Board of Canada in deciding if he was ready to be released. It was unprecedented, the hearing was told.</p> <p>His effort paid off, Thursday.</p> <p>Amara, 37, once a fiery leader of what became known as the Toronto 18 terror plots, was granted three months of day parole to a halfway house in Toronto.</p> <p>The decision came awkwardly.</p> <p>The two-member parole panel returned from deliberation to deny him parole, instead wanting to first see how he handles temporary leaves from prison. Amara’s lawyer, Nancy Charbonneau, interrupted to say the 60-day temporary leave program was no longer available, so the hearing adjourned while the panel reconsidered.</p> <p>When they returned, panel chairman Doug Kirkpatrick said the board would split the difference — instead of the usual six-months parole, they would grant him three months to a halfway house to undergo a post-release program and prove himself.</p> <p>“Thank you very much,” Amara said in response. “I beg you, from the bottom of my heart, I don’t want you to go to your bed tonight anxious about me.... I don’t want you to worry about me, because you’re not going to be hearing anything bad about me in the future.”</p> <p>“We certainly hope not,” Kirkpatrick said. “For no personal reason, I hope we don’t see you again.”</p> <p>Amara made a plea to the parole board earlier in his hearing.</p> <p>“I just hope to go back to society. I want to be a contributing member,” Amara said. “I don’t want to be ashamed for the rest of my life. I don’t want my family to be ashamed for the rest of their lives. And the Muslim community.</p>

"I'd really like an opportunity to fix what I did wrong 17 years ago," he said from Warkworth Institution, a medium-security prison in Ontario, where he is serving a life sentence for participating in a terrorist group and intending to cause an explosion for the benefit of a terrorist group.

Amara was one of 18 people arrested in a shocking anti-terrorism probe in 2006 that uncovered two connected mass-casualty plots targeting Toronto and Ottawa.

Amara emerged as a hardline, leading figure in the failed effort.

At his hearing, Amara, slender and fit, sat passively through most of his hearing in a white T-shirt and blue jeans, his dark hair and beard trimmed short. He maintained the practiced stillness and neutral expression of a long-term inmate. When he spoke, his hands showed his emphasis.

But when talking of the support of his family, particularly his sister, while he was imprisoned in the Special Handling Unit, Canada's highest security prison, he broke down.

"I literally owe her my life. I'm going to try not to cry," Amara said before failing dramatically. He bowed his head almost to his lap, covered his face with his hands and wept.

"I was in a really dark place," he said after a few moments. "I was really closed off, I pushed everybody away, especially in the first years. She was wise enough to just wait and if it wasn't for her, I wouldn't be here today."

He also spoke of his daughter, who has lived her 17 years entirely while Amara has been in prison, and of his parents, who now live abroad.

Canada's corrections system has struggled to deal with religiously radicalized inmates incarcerated for terrorism. The phenomenon is relatively recent and the cases few.

This leaves inmates in institutional limbo, without programs in prison to help manage their special risks and motivation, and no tools to assess their progress when applying for release.

Typically, the parole board finds comfort in actuarial measures — just like an insurance company — based on statistical amalgamation of similar offenders. For jihadist terrorists, there are too few in Canada to make such empirically meaningful measures.

At Amara's previous parole hearing, last year, he was denied release in large part because of the absence of such information.

"I realized this would always be a problem," Amara said.

Preparing for his next try, Amara volunteered to speak to members of the RCMP's Integrated National Security Enforcement Team (INSET) — he called it an interrogation — with an understanding a report would be shared with the parole board, his hearing was told.

"I was confident because I knew I had changed," he said.

The RCMP's report, based on two full days of speaking with Amara, was not made public. The Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) and the parole board have not seen the full report. It was summarized in a letter from an RCMP Chief Superintendent, with information deemed sensitive to national security removed.

Robin Lukezych, a CSC institutional parole officer assigned to Amara's case, said the RCMP documented Amara's radicalization and deradicalization in three sections: his childhood, his crime and the aftermath.

“INSET officers verbally informed Mr. Amara’s parole officer of their belief that Mr. Amara is no longer radicalized and the changes in his attitudes, values and beliefs appear to be long-term,” Lukezych said.

“The RCMP have not indicated any immediate concerns with day parole in this case.”

A psychological report on Amara came to a similar conclusion.

The report “emphasized the importance of culture, ethnicity and religious issues in understanding terrorist activity,” Lukezych said. “It is important to consider the political climate during the commission of the index offenses, which includes the war on terror in the time following 9/11.

“Mr. Amara cited Canada’s involvement in the U.S-led military ventures in Afghanistan and Iraq as motivation.”

Apparently quoting the psychological report, she told the parole board: “This entire minority population had to live under a cloud of suspicion where the actions of the 9/11 perpetrators were reduced to their religious beliefs, painting all Muslims as political terrorists which ultimately transformed the lives of Canadian Muslims.”

The stigmatization and loss of dignity “would be particularly damaging and alienating for a young man such as Mr. Amara,” Lukezych said.

Lack of critical thinking skills, difficulty dealing with emotions and fragile family ties may have “increased vulnerability to adopting violent extremism.”

Amara told the parole board the atrocities of Islamic State jihadists in the more recent fighting — known as ISIL or ISIS — drove him to re-evaluate and reject his radical beliefs. He realized he could separate his ideology from his religion, and keep his faith and reject violent extremism.

“I built a new map of reality and I’m there now.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 US non-emergency staff to leave Nigeria
SOURCE	https://www.news24.com/news24/africa/news/risk-of-terrorist-attacks-us-orders-non-emergency-staff-families-to-leave-nigerian-capital-20221028
GIST	<p>Washington – The United States on Thursday ordered its non-emergency diplomatic staff and their families to leave the Nigerian capital Abuja, citing a "heightened risk of terrorist attacks".</p> <p>The US State Department did not specify the threat, but its country summary for Nigeria warns that "terrorists may attack with little or no warning", targeting malls, markets, hotels, restaurants, bars or schools.</p> <p>The latest US security move comes after the embassy on Sunday urged Americans to limit their movements due to an "elevated risk of terror attacks in Nigeria, specifically in Abuja" – a warning repeated by Britain, Canada and Australia.</p> <p>Abuja, a pre-planned capital of six million people built in the 1980s, has historically been seen as safe, but insurgents linked to the Islamic State (ISIS) group have claimed several attacks in surrounding areas over the past six months.</p> <p>Nigeria's domestic security agency has urged residents to stay calm and to take "necessary precautions", with police ordering a counter-terrorism exercise in the capital.</p> <p>Residents in the Abuja area, including Western diplomats, have been increasingly worried about insecurity after a mass jailbreak from Kuje, a prison on the outskirts of the city, in July.</p>

HEADLINE	10/27 IS claims attack on Taliban vehicle
SOURCE	https://www.dawn.com/news/1717226/attack-on-taliban-vehicle-kills-five-is-claims-responsibility
GIST	<p>KABUL: An attack on a vehicle in western Afghanistan killed five medical personnel employed by Taliban security forces on Thursday, a defence ministry spokesperson said.</p> <p>The militant Islamic State group claimed responsibility for the attack, according to the militant group's channel on Telegram.</p> <p>Taliban Ministry of Defence spokesperson Enayatullah Khowrazmi said several employees were also injured in the attack.</p> <p>"This morning, unknown armed men attacked a ... vehicle carrying medical personnel of the 207th Al-Farooq Army Corps," said Khowrazmi, referring to a Taliban military unit headquartered in the western province of Herat.</p> <p>Since taking over the country in 2021, the Taliban say they have focused on restoring security to the war-torn nation. However, in recent months a number of attacks have taken place and the United Nations has said security is deteriorating.</p> <p>In the western city of Herat, a large blast hit near a mosque in September, killing 18 people including a pro-Taliban cleric and in July, an attack on a Al-Farooq 207 Corps vehicle killed two security force members.</p> <p>Several attacks have also taken place in Kabul, including an explosion this month that hit a mosque in the vicinity of the heavily fortified interior ministry compound, killing four people and wounding 25.</p> <p>It was not clear who behind those attacks. Other attacks in the country have been claimed by the IS.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/27 Fed agents improperly gathered intel
SOURCE	https://www.ijpr.org/politics-government/2022-10-27/newly-un-redacted-report-shows-how-feds-politicized-response-to-2020-portland-protests
GIST	<p>An internal Department of Homeland Security report assessing the agency's intelligence collection on Portland racial justice protesters in 2020 has been released nearly in its entirety. A heavily redacted version of the report was released in 2021.</p> <p>The newly public portions show in more granular detail how Acting Secretary of Homeland Security Chad Wolf and Acting Deputy Secretary Ken Cuccinelli led efforts to politicize intelligence operations in Portland, in many instances pushing constitutional boundaries.</p> <p>The now un-redacted portions of the report describe the two agency heads requesting so-called operational background reports, known as OBRs or "baseball cards," on every person who attended protests, a request that would have entailed intelligence dossiers on potentially thousands of Portlanders. That was apparently motivated by a belief that a "U.S person" was funding the protests in the city.</p> <p>Since 2020, Oregon Senator Ron Wyden and other members of Oregon's congressional delegation have pressed the Justice Department and DHS for more details about the Trump administration's response to the 2020 racial justice protests. In a statement Thursday, Wyden said Oregonians have a right to a full accounting of the Trump administration's "twisted efforts to provoke violence in Portland for his political gain."</p> <p>"Now the public knows much more about how political DHS officials spied on Oregonians for exercising their First Amendment right to protest and justified it with baseless conspiracy theories," Wyden said.</p>

Rather than compiling reports on every protest attendee, as originally directed, the Department of Homeland Security's Intelligence and Analysis personnel put together baseball cards on only those people who had been arrested or charged with "violent acts." Those reports include past criminal history, travel history, "derogatory information from DHS or Intelligence Community holdings," as well as publicly available social media. Draft reports included friends lists from social media accounts but even the final reports included "some of their First Amendment speech activity (posts) were still collected."

The intelligence collection operation coincided with a federal law enforcement deployment to Portland that lasted for over a month in 2020. The contingent, made up of officers from the U.S. Marshals Service, Federal Protective Service and Customs and Border Protection, had limited training in crowd control. Their violent tactics and the popular resistance they sparked fed a Trump administration narrative that Portland was under siege by what the administration routinely characterized as violent antifa terrorists.

Now, the unredacted report shows how that narrative trickled down through the agency and impacted operations on the ground, politicizing intelligence in ways that many found alarming.

"[Acting Under Secretary for Intelligence and Analysis Brian Murphy's] intended purpose was to use the OBRs to confirm his suspicions that a link existed amongst the arrestees and identify a single individual or group that was "masterminding" the attacks," the report reads.

Murphy, whose name had been redacted until now, also insisted analysts refer to protesters as "Violent Antifa Anarchist Inspired," a demand analysts had long insisted was not grounded in any of their intelligence collection.

"For weeks, the analysts had been telling Mr. Murphy that because ANTIFA was not in the collection, it could not be put into the analysis," the newly unredacted portions read, making clear that the previously unnamed Murphy forced his political views into intelligence over the objection of analysts.

"Notwithstanding this feedback from the I&A analysts, on July 25, 2020, Mr. Murphy sent an email to his senior leadership instructing them that henceforth, the violent opportunists in Portland were to be reported as VAAI," the report reads, using the acronym for "violent antifa anarchists inspired."

An associate general counsel thought the email was so egregious that it constituted a questionable intelligence activity and warranted being briefed to the Director of National Intelligence, according to the report.

Portland was one of several cities seeing large-scale protests after George Floyd's murder. The federal government's response was so ad hoc and rushed that at one point intelligence personnel supporting operations in Portland and elsewhere bought laptops for new hires at a Washington D.C. Best Buy, prompting two people to complain they had been given equipment lacking the usual suite of security software they expected on a sensitive government computer.

"Without these tools, they believed that they were vulnerable to any nefarious actors looking to expose their private information, doxx DHS personnel, or invade the employee's home network," the report says.

The unredacted report was released after Kenneth Wainstein, the current Undersecretary for Intelligence and Analysis revised the organization's public records policies at Wyden's behest. The new policy requires the disclosure of sources and methods, typically closely guarded tools for collecting intelligence, unless the disclosure would "materially negate" their effectiveness.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 Italy white supremacist terror arrest
SOURCE	https://www.ansa.it/english/news/general_news/2022/10/27/italian-white-supremacist-arrested-on-terror-charges_6d06460a-530a-470f-a4ab-f7e1e8e39098.html

GIST	<p>(ANSA) - ROME, OCT 27 - Italian police on Thursday arrested an alleged white supremacist from the southern region of Puglia on terrorism charges, prosecutors said.</p> <p>The young man allegedly said he was ready to make an "extreme sacrifice to defend the white race" and carry out acts of violence.</p> <p>The investigation that led to the 23-year-old's arrest started in 2021 via monitoring of far-right, supremacist groups linked to the "Sieg Heil" Telegram channel, which was allegedly used by the young man to spread anti-Semitic, misogynist and neo-Nazi material.</p> <p>He was allegedly a member of the American supremacist organization 'The Base'.</p> <p>He alleged acted as a 'lone wolf' in Italy, presenting himself as the group's sole member here.</p> <p>He had weapons at his home and allegedly said he was ready to "move on to action".</p> <p>He also spread the supremacist group's propaganda, translating it into Italian, and had alleged created his own group of extremists in Italy made up of three or four people.</p> <p>The suspect also shared a video on Telegram in which he alleged threatened Life Senator and Holocaust survivor Liliana Segre with death.</p> <p>Police allegedly found the names of white supremacist terrorists on the suspect's weapons, such as Luca Traini, Anders Behring Breivik and Brenton Harrison Tarrant.</p> <p>Investigators said there were "alarming" similarities between the material they seized and that used by Payton Gendron, the 18-year-old accused of the May 14 Buffalo shooting in which 10 people were killed and three injured. (ANSA).</p>
Return to Top	

Suspicious, Unusual

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 Secret prisoner swap splintered US, China
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/huawei-china-meng-kovrig-spavor-prisoner-swap-11666877779?mod=hp_lead_pos7
GIST	<p>4:30 a.m., Sept. 25, 2021, Tianjin, China</p> <p>A pair of prison vans approached the terminal at Tianjin Binhai International Airport carrying two Canadians, blindfolded and disoriented from 1,019 days in captivity.</p> <p>On the moonlit tarmac, an unmarked U.S. Gulfstream jet waited to take them home. Nearby, the Canadian ambassador paced the carpeted lounge.</p> <p>Fifteen time zones away, an Air China Boeing 777 stood ready at Vancouver International Airport. Armed officers of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police kept watch in the terminal. A Chinese executive in Manolo Blahnik heels strode past them, carrying a bag with a Carolina Herrera dress shaded the same vibrant red as China's flag and trailed by an entourage of lawyers, aides and diplomats who called her Madam Meng. She, too, was headed home.</p> <p>One of the most significant prisoner swaps in recent diplomatic history was under way, after a top-secret negotiation that was three years in the making.</p> <p>At the Tianjin airport, a Chinese official was on the phone to confirm the woman's passage through the Vancouver terminal. He then cleared the Canadian prisoners. The Canadian ambassador fumbled for their passports in a yellow envelope and ushered the men to an immigration checkpoint.</p>

A Chinese guard stamped the passports and directed them to the runway.

When Meng Wanzhou was arrested in Canada in 2018, she was chief financial officer of China's Huawei Technologies Co., a telecommunications giant founded by her father that was poised to win the race to build 5G networks in most of the world's largest economies. Canadian authorities took Ms. Meng into custody in Vancouver, British Columbia, on behalf of the U.S., which had filed bank-fraud charges against her.

The detention of the 50-year-old celebrity businesswoman, and U.S. efforts to extradite her for trial in New York, transformed her into a national martyr in China and a symbol of America's growing hostility to its nearest rival.

Days later, the two Canadians were seized in retaliation for Ms. Meng's arrest. Michael Kovrig, 50, was on leave from Canada's Foreign Ministry to work for the International Crisis Group in Hong Kong. Michael Spavor, 46, ran a business that helped students, athletes and academics visit North Korea. During their incarceration and harsh treatment, the two men were sympathetically shorthanded in news reports and by Western leaders as "the two Michaels." Both men denied any wrongdoing.

The arrests marked a turning point in the growing power competition between the U.S. and China, helping shift it from mutual wariness to full-blown animosity. Unlike last century's Cold War between the U.S. and Soviet Union, the prisoner skirmish reflected a U.S.-China battle for control of the international flow of data and, ultimately, primacy in global commerce.

Negotiations to free the prisoners strained relations between China, U.S. and Canada. Each nation navigated its own security concerns and domestic political pressures. The U.S. pressed Chinese leader Xi Jinping to release the two Canadians and cited their arrest as evidence of Beijing's disregard for the international rules-based order. Mr. Xi saw Ms. Meng's detention as another underhanded attempt by the U.S. to contain his country's advance.

Mr. Xi penned more than 100 notes about her case, and he discussed the Michaels with two U.S. presidents. Mr. Xi refused to free them until Ms. Meng was released. Canada was caught in the middle.

Dominic Barton, the Canadian ambassador, spent hundreds of hours at a whiteboard in an embassy safe room charting proposals to get his countrymen released and visiting them in prison. He delivered coded messages in rapid-fire English he knew eavesdropping guards would struggle to understand. Until the final moments, Canada worried that a news leak or a stray remark from a U.S. senator would scuttle the exchange.

This account is based on interviews with current and former U.S., Canadian and Chinese officials, lawyers and prosecutors, former Huawei officials, people familiar with Ms. Meng's legal team and her staff, as well as current and former diplomats of the three countries. It draws from court documents, real-estate and corporate records, classified diplomatic cables, unpublished photographs and notes of government officials involved in the negotiations.

A spokesman for the Chinese consulate in New York declined to answer questions. A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman has said that Messrs. Kovrig and Spavor were detained and tried in accordance with Chinese law, and their case was unrelated to Ms. Meng's arrest.

1 .FIRST TO FALL

Meng Wanzhou planned to spend only a few hours in Vancouver when she touched down on Dec. 1, 2018. It was one of four cities where she kept a home.

The Huawei CFO checked seven suitcases, packed with presentation material for meetings in four countries, including Mexico. The country's newly inaugurated president, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, was open to Huawei building 5G networks in his country, brushing off U.S. security concerns.

Ms. Meng also booked a stop in Buenos Aires, where she would join her father, Ren Zhengfei, Huawei's billionaire founder. Mr. Ren had once announced that none of his three children was visionary enough to succeed him. Ms. Meng, who crisscrossed the world representing her father's empire, seemed determined to prove him wrong.

Around the time Ms. Meng walked into Hong Kong's international airport, word of her itinerary passed over a secure line to the Palacio Duhau hotel, site of the Group of 20 summit in Buenos Aires. A White House lawyer took the call in a soundproof tent set up in a suite. Afterward, the lawyer woke up John Bolton: Ms. Meng was en route.

Mr. Bolton, then-national security adviser in the Trump administration, knew Ms. Meng's arrest could disrupt the summit's marquee event that evening, a dinner between President Donald Trump and Chinese leader Xi Jinping. Yet Mr. Bolton, a longtime China hawk, felt it was worth the risk. The president didn't yet know about the plan. White House staffers later debated whether Mr. Bolton had told Mr. Trump or if it hadn't fully registered with the president.

While Ms. Meng was on her flight to Vancouver, Federal Bureau of Investigation agents passed along details of her travel outfit: a black Abercrombie & Fitch hoodie, dark sweatpants, her hair just past the shoulders.

Federal prosecutors had a sealed indictment against Ms. Meng and Huawei for bank fraud, alleging she had helped disguise the company's business dealings in Iran. The evidence was in a PowerPoint presentation Ms. Meng showed an executive of HSBC Holdings PLC in the back room of a Hong Kong restaurant in 2013. Huawei, she claimed in her presentation, wasn't violating U.S. sanctions on Iran.

The charge was narrow, but it would serve a broader national security objective—to help Washington convince U.S. allies Huawei couldn't be trusted.

In a briefing room at the Vancouver airport, six Canadian police officers and border guards studied photos of Ms. Meng. "Seize any electronic devices on MENG to preserve evidence, as there will be a request from FBI," a Canadian constable scrawled in a spiral notebook.

Ms. Meng's extradition request had arrived from Washington on a password-protected file that Canadian authorities needed more than a day to unlock. The delay meant Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, also attending the G-20 summit in Buenos Aires, was told of the request only around the time officers took positions at the Vancouver airport's Gate 65 jet bridge.

At 11:18 a.m., Cathay Pacific Flight 838 rolled to a stop at the terminal gate.

Two border guards escorted Ms. Meng to a counter where another guard combed through her luggage. Officers asked questions, among them: Did Huawei ever sell products in Iran? They collected her electronics and demanded her passwords. One by one, they slid her devices into security bags, as the U.S. had requested: a red-cased Huawei phone, a black-and-pink 256-gigabyte thumb drive, a pink-framed MacBook and an iPad with a sticker of Winnie-the-Pooh, a character sometimes used on social media to mock Mr. Xi, China's leader.

"You have committed fraud, we're arresting you, and then you will be sent back to the United States," a police officer told Ms. Meng.

"Me?" she said. "You're saying I committed fraud in the United States?"

"I don't have details," another officer replied. "They have a fraud charge against you regarding your company, uh, Huawei?"

An officer added, apologetically, "We're only assisting the United States."

At the police station, Ms. Meng was fingerprinted, and allowed a phone call to the only Chinese-speaking lawyer Huawei could find on short notice, a patent attorney. As the attorney dashed to the station, Ms. Meng began to gasp for air, worrying officers who sped her to a hospital.

Messrs. Trump and Xi were dining on Argentine sirloin, accompanied by a 2014 Malbec. The goal of the dinner was to reach a truce in an escalating U.S.-China trade war. Neither man appeared aware of Ms. Meng's arrest. Mr. Bolton, seated near Mr. Trump, didn't mention it.

Mr. Xi learned shortly after, according to Chinese government officials, and it struck him as deceptive and an insult. He had just agreed to buy more U.S. food and energy.

Mr. Trump questioned Mr. Bolton days later at a White House Christmas dinner, according to people familiar with the conversation. "Why did you arrest Meng?" the president said. "Don't you know she's the Ivanka Trump of China?"

Chinese Foreign Ministry officials briefed Mr. Xi on the arrest when he returned to Beijing on Dec. 6. Ms. Meng, ranked China's eighth most powerful businesswoman by Forbes magazine, was in custody and under severe distress.

China's Ministry of Public Security, which had a list of Canadian names, proposed two for him to select. Canada's ambassador was summoned to a Foreign Ministry office in Beijing and warned China would retaliate.

Two days later, a call came to the Canadian embassy from a man stopped while trying to board a 2 p.m. flight to South Korea from a city in China's northeast.

"I'm being questioned," Michael Spavor said.

That night, the embassy got another call, this one about Michael Kovrig. He had been walking in Beijing when he was bundled into a vehicle.

For hours, embassy officials waited to hear from the two men, hoping authorities would release them. Then came the whir of the office fax machine, signaling trouble. Fax was the preferred channel of China's Foreign Ministry. The machine spat out back-to-back missives announcing the detention of two Canadian citizens suspected of threatening national security.

Canada's ambassador met with officials in Beijing. They asked for Ms. Meng's release. "He who ties the knot must untie it," one of them said.

A month later, Mr. Trudeau cemented his government's position at a snow-drenched cabinet retreat in Quebec. Arrests of innocent Canadian citizens wouldn't force Ms. Meng's release.

"Canada cannot be bullied," he told his cabinet members.

The prime minister, a liberal leader who in public appearances sometimes appeared boyish, had a harder side. Just before he assumed office, Islamic State militants had abducted two elderly Canadians. Mr. Trudeau later refused to pay a ransom, and they were decapitated.

It was his worst moment as prime minister—and the right decision, Mr. Trudeau said at the cabinet retreat.

When Canada's ambassador to China said in public remarks that Ms. Meng had a strong case to fight her extradition, Mr. Trudeau fired him.

To free Ms. Meng, Huawei assembled a team of more than a dozen lawyers, including some of the corporate world's highest-paid. They all agreed she was unfairly trapped in the rivalry between Washington and Beijing.

One of Huawei's recruits—trial lawyer Reid Weingarten, whose clients had included Goldman Sachs Group Inc.'s Lloyd Blankfein and convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein—carried a report into a meeting early in 2019 with Justice Department officials. It detailed reasons the defense team believed Ms. Meng would easily win her case.

Elevating a six-year-old PowerPoint presentation to a charge of bank fraud was an overreach the Justice Department would regret, according to Ms. Meng's lawyers. Some doubted prosecutors had the appetite to go to trial.

Instead, they found little hope for a swift resolution. Federal prosecutors in the case were confident. If Ms. Meng wanted to plead guilty, they were ready to talk. Otherwise, they would see her in court.

The White House had a lot riding on the case. Huawei was on the other side of a contest for control of 5G, the wireless network slated to ferry data to billions of devices worldwide. It was a fight the U.S. didn't want to lose.

Huawei was offering to deliver its 5G equipment—antennas, base stations and routers—more quickly and less expensively than its Western competitors. The company, a relative newcomer compared with century-old telecom rivals Nokia Corp. and Ericsson AB, had become a world leader.

U.S. national security officials were convinced of a danger other nations thought could be managed—that Huawei was assembling the architecture China could use to conduct worldwide surveillance.

In 2009, U.S. cyberspies had infiltrated the company's networks. FBI analysts, worried Beijing could use those same networks to spy, alerted their bosses. Defense Department officials urged U.S. telecom companies to steer clear of Huawei. A 2012 congressional investigation concluded China could use Huawei equipment for espionage but didn't find clear evidence it had.

By the time of the Trump administration, Huawei had built a seemingly insurmountable lead over its rivals. An analysis that circulated among intelligence officials warned Huawei would control 80% of the global market for 5G equipment. National security officials feared that would hand China a surveillance tool with the potential to collect all manner of secrets, from the blueprints of nuclear plants to military plans of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Defense officials and diplomats reached out to America's closest foreign partners and pushed for Huawei bans. The company dispatched its own lobbyists, lawyers and public-relations firms to say it had never conducted espionage and never would. Huawei challenged the Trump administration to reveal the evidence it claimed to hold, material the U.S. said was secret to protect its sources and methods.

The White House instead offered a slim thread of evidence. In 2017, Beijing had introduced an intelligence law that said "any organization or citizen shall support, assist, and cooperate with state intelligence work."

Huawei, the Trump administration argued, was bound by law to spy. The company countered that it applied only in China.

U.S. diplomats took printouts of the law to allies around the world, reading it aloud to officials caught up in what many saw as a feud between superpowers. The U.K., South Korea, Germany, Italy, Mexico and Canada balked at pressure to ban the company. Some were baffled by the escalating campaign.

Huawei said it was a Chinese success story whose founder was motivated not by rivalry with America but admiration for it.

Mr. Ren, a former army engineer, started out in 1987 selling telecom switches from an apartment in Shenzhen, a small city overshadowed by neighboring Hong Kong. In his telling, a 1993 Greyhound bus trip across the U.S. stirred grand ambitions.

In Dallas, Mr. Ren recalled visiting the 60,000-acre headquarters of Texas Instruments Inc. Employees there clocked overtime to take him on a daylong tour of research facilities, revealing technical details of new high-speed devices.

At National Semiconductor in California, at the time one of the world's leading chip makers, he saw an exhibition of optical devices and 3G network switching technologies.

Mr. Ren hired a taxi to drive around the Silicon Valley research facility of International Business Machines Corp. to calculate how many square kilometers it encompassed. He felt "the United States will prosper forever," he recalled in a blog post.

A quarter-century later, his company was a leader in artificial-intelligence research and had a smartphone brand that sold more units than Apple Inc. Huawei opened a 4-square-mile campus outside Shenzhen that featured Swiss-style trams zipping past replicas of European castles and landmarks of Paris and Verona, Italy, that housed Huawei offices and research labs.

As the company grew, it was stalked by allegations—from former employees, rival corporations and U.S. officials—that its advance relied on deceit. Huawei denied the allegations and said it was committed to complying with laws in global markets. The company settled lawsuits with competitors that accused it of stealing trade secrets, among them Cisco Systems Inc. and Quintel Technology Ltd.

Paperwork for search warrants and interview notes piled up in a Justice Department office in New York. Some companies were afraid China would retaliate if they took Huawei to court, feeding a view at the department that Huawei's competitive advantage was impunity.

A bank ended up providing investigators with evidence for the government's first case, which originated in the Brooklyn, N.Y., office.

In 2013, HSBC had asked Huawei to explain a news report claiming it secretly owned and operated a company that sold its products in Iran. Afterward, Ms. Meng then told the HSBC executive in the Hong Kong restaurant that Huawei adhered to U.S. sanctions.

Months after the meeting, border agents searching Ms. Meng's electronics during a transit through John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York recovered a text file of her talking points concerning Iran. It had been deleted but not erased from the hard drive.

The file became useful when HSBC, on the hook for its own legal missteps, had to give federal prosecutors a dossier on its business with Huawei, including what Ms. Meng had said about her company's dealings in Iran.

Federal investigators assigned a code name to keep the probe secret. HSBC and other banks cooperating with the Justice Department feared for the safety of their executives in China, as well as business ties there.

Prosecutors in April 2017 served Huawei with a subpoena to answer questions about whether it conducted business in sanctioned countries, and company executives subsequently halted travel to the U.S.

In August 2018, prosecutors readied an indictment against Huawei and Ms. Meng. They kept it under seal until she landed in a country within their reach.

Ms. Meng's jail in Vancouver was a \$4.2 million house facing the North Shore Mountains. It was the smaller of her two homes in the city.

U.S. officials had hoped Canada would keep Ms. Meng behind bars until her extradition. The billionaire's daughter, who had been issued at least seven passports, was a flight risk, prosecutors argued during her December 2018 bail hearing.

Instead, a judge had granted her bail, set at 10 million Canadian dollars, equivalent to \$7.5 million, and imposed a curfew from 11 p.m. to 6 a.m. Otherwise, she was free to roam. A GPS monitor on her ankle kept Ms. Meng tethered to authorities.

Later, she received court permission to move, for security reasons, to a \$12.3 million, seven-bedroom villa, two doors from the home of the U.S. consul general. Mr. Ren dispatched a team of Huawei employees to help with public relations and his daughter's defense.

A vice president from the Brazil office and a China-based legal director were the first to arrive. They stayed in a villa nearby. A PR manager from Huawei's headquarters followed, and he began holding impromptu news conferences on the courthouse steps, irritating Ms. Meng and her legal advisers. They worried his public statements could jeopardize the case, but Mr. Ren overruled their objections.

By April, Huawei had a more senior team in place, including Mr. Ren's translator and personal assistant, who served as a liaison.

The former head sales executive in Europe directed Ms. Meng's daily Zumba classes and yoga workouts. Personal chefs prepared health-conscious meals. A florist arranged bouquets for the dining table. Mr. Ren tried to prod his daughter into pursuing a Ph.D. while she waited for her release.

The cast of helpers and aides was known as Sabrina's Team, after one of the English-language names she used.

When Ms. Meng stepped out, a set of court-appointed bodyguards, stationed in a tent pitched on the property, trailed her. Fashion boutiques accommodated her private shopping tours. She dined with friends at the Dynasty Seafood restaurant, where the city's Chinese elite enjoyed dim sum and city views.

Huawei had built a foothold in Canada's telecom market, including a 5G research center. Shortly after Ms. Meng's arrest, the company ramped up its advertising around the city, draping bus stops, billboards and shopping malls in banners, many in Chinese, featuring its latest slogan—Huawei: a higher intelligence.

On March 6, 2019, three months after her arrest, bodyguards and TV cameras followed Ms. Meng into court for her extradition hearing.

On the courthouse steps, protesters opposing Beijing's crackdown in Hong Kong set fire to a Chinese flag. Some held placards scrawled in all caps, "EXTRADITE MENG!"

The court hearing lasted just a few minutes, marking the start of a protracted legal battle. Each time Ms. Meng went to court, she passed a Chinese nurse, a member of China's Uyghur minority, holding pictures of Messrs. Kovrig and Spavor, the two Michaels, to protest their detention.

In the northeastern city of Dandong, on the North Korea border, Michael Spavor lived with some 20 other inmates in Cell 315. At night, they slept side by side like sardines. The overflowing compound was sweltering on hot days and cold after dark. Meals were meager and unchanging: cabbage, eggs and rice.

Mr. Spavor, a Calgary native, traveled to South Korea at age 21 and taught English. He became fascinated with the authoritarian state of North Korea and began arranging tours. In 2013 and 2014, he planned three trips for Dennis Rodman, the former Chicago Bulls basketball star who had his own interest in the secretive country and its leader, Kim Jong Un.

Mr. Spavor impressed party guests in South Korea with his pitch-perfect North Korean accent.

The two Michaels had met once at a dinner in Beijing. The expatriates chatted about China, North Korea and relations between the two countries.

Mr. Kovrig had gone to Budapest after college in the mid-1990s, joining a wave of Westerners who flooded into once-closed Central European countries. He worked as a reporter and sang in a punk band before returning home to join Canada's diplomatic service.

Fluorescent lights glowed 24 hours a day in Mr. Kovrig's windowless cell at Beijing's No. 1 Detention Center. For almost six months, he was confined without a whiff of fresh air. To break the monotony, he devised a daily workout of push-ups, six-minute planks and 7,000 steps around the tiny space.

Prison authorities spent the first months of Mr. Kovrig's incarceration conducting interrogations that stretched to 10 hours. Over and over, they questioned his work at the Canadian embassy in Beijing.

In June 2019, after more than 150 days in prison, Mr. Kovrig was allowed to send a batch of letters home. The embassy scanned the stack of handwritten notes and emailed them to his wife in Toronto.

Vina Nadjibulla, a 44-year-old international security analyst, met Mr. Kovrig while they were studying international relations at Columbia University in 2001. She was raised in wartime Kabul, the daughter of a Soviet Jew and an Afghan Muslim, and had found her calling in conflict prevention at the United Nations. Mr. Kovrig proposed to her in the U.N. Assembly Hall.

He entered Canada's foreign service, and she worked on the reconstruction of postwar Sierra Leone. The couple had separated by the time of Mr. Kovrig's arrest. But each had promised to help the other if they were ever kidnapped during their work abroad.

Ms. Nadjibulla put her life on hold, flying between Toronto, Washington and Ottawa to petition officials who could help free Mr. Kovrig. In June, Mr. Trudeau invited Ms. Nadjibulla to his office, and she read from her husband's letters.

"If there is one faint silver lining to this hell, it's this: trauma carved caverns of psychological pain through my mind," one letter said. "I find myself filling those gulfs with a love for you and for life that is vast, deep and more profound and comforting than what I've ever experienced."

"Come sit with me and walk with me in spirit," Mr. Kovrig wrote. "Help me feel less isolated. Let me share the love I have for you and we'll get through this together."

About a week later, Mr. Trudeau arrived in Osaka, Japan, for the G-20 summit. He set out to lobby the one person who could release his two countrymen—Mr. Xi, the most powerful Chinese leader since Mao Zedong.

2 .LUCKY BREAK

In meetings with Western leaders, Mr. Xi seldom joked and rarely smiled. He usually began with a monologue of talking points almost identical to his public statements. He so resolutely stuck to scripted remarks that his interpreter simply read aloud from a prepared English text. When finished, Mr. Xi would ask, "Don't you agree?"

White House officials analyzing transcripts from closed-door talks often struggled to understand whether Mr. Xi had said anything of substance beyond his prepared statements.

In their conversations, Mr. Trump would try six or seven ways of bluntly asking a specific question, and Mr. Xi would repeat the same vague responses.

Other world leaders traded small talk and called each other by their first names—Donald, Angela, Vladimir. Even behind closed doors, Mr. Xi stuck to “Mr. President” or “Madam Prime Minister” and other honorifics.

Throughout the first half of 2019, Mr. Trudeau had failed to get an audience with Mr. Xi. His diplomats in China were frozen out. The Chinese reply to Mr. Trudeau was frustrating: It would breach protocol for Mr. Xi, China’s head of state, to speak with Mr. Trudeau, merely the head of government of Canada, whose head of state was Queen Elizabeth II.

Beijing expressed itself through trade restrictions. China blocked shipments of Canadian canola oil at its ports. In May, it barred pork from two of Canada’s top slaughterhouses. Three days ahead of the G-20 summit, it stopped all Canadian meat from entering China.

Mr. Trudeau asked Mr. Trump to speak up for Messrs. Kovrig and Spavor when the U.S. president met with the Chinese leader at the summit in Osaka.

At their meeting, Mr. Trump handed Mr. Xi a sheet of paper that listed the names of Americans being held in China. The names, written in Chinese and English, also included Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig.

“It would be a great gesture,” Mr. Trump said with a stroke of flattery, if China could help these people get home.

Scanning the names, Mr. Xi pointedly noted that the last time the two leaders had met was the day of Ms. Meng’s arrest.

Mr. Trudeau got his opening by chance. Chile was a guest at the G-20 meeting, but its representative didn’t attend a scheduled assembly. That left Canada seated alphabetically between China and Brazil—and Mr. Xi seated to the right of Mr. Trudeau.

The Canadian prime minister passed a note, handwritten in Chinese, to Mr. Xi. “We have to communicate,” it said. Mr. Trudeau proposed they select two confidants to begin backchannel talks.

The two men stepped to the side of a conference floor, exchanged pleasantries through a translator and clasped hands.

Days later, Dominic Barton, the former global managing partner of consulting firm McKinsey & Co., carried a thin folder of notes into the gated Diaoyutai state guesthouse in Beijing. His meeting was unofficial and secret. He told his secretary he was on vacation.

The 60-year-old Canadian had risen in the slipstream of China’s economic miracle, and through more than a decade living and working in the country had ties with Chinese entrepreneurs, executives and party leaders. He had written two books on China and taught at Tsinghua University in Beijing.

Mr. Barton wasn’t a diplomat. Yet Mr. Trudeau believed he could break the diplomatic logjam and bring home the two Michaels.

An adviser had informed the prime minister that there was a 40% chance Mr. Barton’s first meeting with Chinese officials would go well, a 40% chance it would go well enough for a second visit and a 20% chance it would go sour.

The silver-haired executive smiled at a pair of Foreign Ministry officials when he and the adviser entered the meeting room. An elderly Communist Party official began reading from a stack of pages, pausing with dramatic effect for the translator to catch up.

“You have arrested Madam Meng.”

“You are lapdogs of the United States.”

Mr. Barton interrupted, and the ministry official, appointed by Mr. Xi, looked up and flipped back to the first page. Then he began rereading from the beginning. For three hours, the official read from an invective-laced script, circling back to the top each time Mr. Barton protested.

Calling for a timeout, Mr. Barton stepped into the hallway. “I think we’re in the 5%,” the adviser said, acknowledging the worse-than-expected outcome.

Mr. Barton held his tongue through the last hour of hectoring. The Chinese official focused on Section 23(3) of Canada’s 1999 Extradition Act, which gave the country’s justice minister authority to cancel an extradition.

“You don’t even know your own law!” the official said.

At the end of the meeting, Mr. Barton asked if China’s Foreign Ministry would attend a second meeting in Ottawa. No, the official said. But the Canadians were welcome to return to Beijing.

That was the only good news Mr. Barton had for the prime minister.

“OK,” Mr. Trudeau said in their phone call. “Well, that’s something.”

Weeks later, Mr. Barton was named Canada’s ambassador to China. His first test was a meeting with Mr. Xi in Beijing’s Great Hall of the People. The ambassador delivered a short speech in his halting Mandarin during an exchange that lasted barely a minute.

“My mission here is to resolve this issue,” Mr. Barton said. “I want to get Madam Meng and our people home.”

“I didn’t know you spoke Mandarin,” Mr. Xi said.

“I don’t...that’s the only Mandarin I know,” the executive replied.

Mr. Xi smiled. “It takes two people to repair a relationship,” he said.

China’s foreign minister, Wang Yi, then offered his own rough-edged advice.

“You got a lot of work to do,” Mr. Wang said, slapping Mr. Barton’s back. “You better exercise hard!”

Shortly after, Mr. Barton made his first visit to a Chinese prison. Guards escorted him past an interrogation room holding a metal chair with straps.

Guards told Mr. Spavor that he had a visitor.

The two men met in a reception room, and they were told not to discuss Mr. Spavor’s case. Mr. Barton leaned across a table toward the handcuffed prisoner. “I’m going to talk to you very fast to be able to smuggle some stuff in about the case,” he said. “Here are the four things I want to discuss. But first, is there anything you want to put on the agenda?”

Mr. Spavor, struggling with sleep, looked numb. “How long will this go on?” he said. “Every day I wake up, and it’s the same.”

Mr. Barton said he didn’t know. He spoke rapidly about efforts to free him and of the health of Mr. Spavor’s father in Calgary, who had fallen seriously ill.

When guards caught mention of Ms. Meng, they interrupted, and Mr. Barton switched subjects before returning to the case.

Mr. Barton also went to the Beijing prison to see Mr. Kovrig, who was livid and gesturing at guards he said were abusive. They had taken away his glasses, citing rules against metal objects.

“Take their numbers!” he said, his 6-foot-4 frame stretching out of his too-small prison uniform. “Write them down!”

In his letters, Mr. Kovrig had called the prison a concrete desert.

He also demanded to know about his release. “When will this get done?”

Messrs. Kovrig and Spavor were headed toward their second Christmas behind bars when NATO leaders mingled at a Dec. 3, 2019, Champagne reception in Buckingham Palace.

It was hosted in the Green Drawing Room, a long, crimson-carpeted hallway decorated with silk wallpaper and gold-framed pictures of England’s monarchs. Kate Middleton and Prince William filtered through the crowd of NATO officials charged with defending the West. Mr. Trudeau spoke privately with the queen.

The prime minister’s chief foreign policy adviser, David Morrison, grabbed a word with White House chief of staff Mick Mulvaney. Earlier in the day, the prime minister had told Mr. Trump about the ordeal the two Michaels were enduring. The U.S. agreed to a meeting in Washington, an opening Canada welcomed.

The White House had already resumed prisoner-exchange talks with Beijing. National security adviser Robert O’Brien, who followed Mr. Bolton, had recently been in Bangkok for a meeting of Asian leaders.

He surprised China’s premier, Li Keqiang, at the meeting with books for the two Canadian prisoners: “Unbroken,” Laura Hillenbrand’s profile of World War II prisoner Louis Zamperini, for Mr. Kovrig, a C.S. Lewis novel for Mr. Spavor and a Bible for each. The books contained handwritten notes reassuring the two captives that the world knew of their suffering.

As Mr. O’Brien passed on the books, he also relayed a diplomatic message: Washington wanted to talk.

Days later, China’s deputy chief of mission in Washington met discreetly with National Security Council staff at the Eisenhower Executive Office Building next to the White House. Washington had no right to demand the Canadians’ release, the Chinese delegate said: “This is not a U.S. matter.”

Beijing, however, was willing to consider another exchange first, to build trust. The U.S. could accelerate the deportation of Bank of China Ltd. manager Xu Guojun, who was sought by Chinese authorities for corruption-related charges.

In return, the Americans wanted David Lin, a Taiwanese-American pastor imprisoned for life after proselytizing in China, and Kai Li, a Chinese-American businessman from Long Island, N.Y., who was serving 10 years for espionage.

A few days before Christmas, a Canadian delegation met in Mr. Mulvaney’s office at the White House, where administration officials were preoccupied with Mr. Trump’s first impeachment hearings.

Canada’s acting ambassador to Washington, Kirsten Hillman, and Messrs. Barton and Morrison squeezed next to John Demers, the Justice Department’s assistant attorney general for national security, and Matt Pottinger, deputy national security adviser. The sooner Ms. Meng was extradited, Mr. Pottinger said, the sooner the two Michaels could be freed.

The Canadian delegation said Ms. Meng's appeal could last years and would almost certainly end in a plea deal. If so, they said, the sooner the U.S. agreed to a plea deal, the better for Messrs. Kovrig and Spavor.

After several videoconference calls through the spring of 2020, Mr. Demers told the Canadian diplomats that the Justice Department was considering a deferred prosecution agreement: Prosecutors wouldn't move forward with charges if Ms. Meng pledged not to commit other federal crimes.

The sticking point was that Ms. Meng would have to admit wrongdoing. Her lawyers said she would never agree because she had done nothing wrong.

Mr. Barton and his closest aides in Beijing frequently worked in a room below the Canadian embassy that had metal-coated walls to repel electronic surveillance. It was named the Salle de Deux Innocents—the Room of Two Innocents—for a travelogue written by former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau after he hitchhiked with a friend across Mao-era China.

In meetings, Mr. Barton and the aides toggled through flipboard pages with names of officials they hoped could persuade China to see the logic of settling Ms. Meng's case with the Justice Department.

Months before her arrest, the two countries had pursued a free-trade agreement. Now, the invitations to state functions slowed to a trickle. Mr. Barton, known for his ability to strike deals in China, couldn't get calls returned, even from longtime acquaintances. "We have come to expect this from the U.S., but we have a 50-year relationship with you," one official said.

The mission wasn't just faltering, Mr. Barton confided to a colleague. It was lurching toward humiliation.

In spring 2020, Mr. Barton hoped for better luck with Mr. Ren, the Huawei founder. He secured an appointment at the company's Shenzhen headquarters, where he found Mr. Ren upbeat about his daughter's prospects.

Madam Meng would be home soon, Mr. Ren said through his translator. Her lawyers had many grounds to appeal her extradition, and they believed one would stick. "I trust the Canadian legal system will do the right thing," he said.

Ms. Meng, her legal team and Huawei were so confident of a win that they had her bags packed and chartered the 787th Boeing 787 ever made, a commemorative Dreamliner jet that would bring her home from Vancouver.

Days before Ms. Meng's May 27, 2020, court hearing, her assistants staged a rehearsal for a planned photo on the steps of British Columbia's Supreme Court building. Huawei colleagues and household staff joined Ms. Meng, flashing victory signs in front of an imagined crowd of supporters.

On the morning of the hearing, they were met instead by a jeering crowd hoisting signs: "Boycott Huawei" and "Free Canadians Michael Kovrig, Michael Spavor."

In the courtroom, Ms. Meng's lawyers told the judge that the U.S. extradition request was faulty. Under Canadian law, the extradition could proceed only if the offense was a crime in both Canada and the U.S.

Although U.S. prosecutors had charged Ms. Meng with bank fraud, the lawyers said, the case was in fact about U.S. sanctions on Iran, and Canada had no such sanctions. The judge declined the appeal.

Vina Nadjibulla, Mr. Kovrig's wife, was watching the judgment and taking notes. She had spent hundreds of hours following the case. After the judge's decision, she went to Washington to brief officials.

Each month, she sent Mr. Kovrig a letter with regards from friends. She included such cryptic messages as, "I was walking in our old stomping grounds," meaning she had been lobbying officials at the U.N.

Ms. Nadjibulla sent nutritional and fitness advice. Mr. Kovrig began sprinkling milk powder and sesame powder from the prison canteen on meals for a protein boost; he tried pistol squats to strengthen his core. His life was so closed he didn't understand that a pandemic was disrupting the world.

Mr. Kovrig read 20 to 30 books a month—on philosophy and geopolitics, classics from Tolstoy to Kafka and Nelson Mandela's prison autobiography, "The Long Walk to Freedom." He and Mr. Spavor read copies of Viktor Frankl's meditation on life in Auschwitz, "Man's Search for Meaning."

Mr. Spavor shared his books with cellmates, who were rarely allowed them. In return, they helped him learn to write Chinese characters.

Mr. Kovrig's letters home included book reviews, and Ms. Nadjibulla forwarded his recommendations to an informal book club of friends and colleagues in the U.S., Canada and Asia.

After months of requests, Chinese prison guards allowed Mr. Kovrig to call his family. Ms. Nadjibulla answered.

"V, is that you?" he said.

In the summer of 2020, as the Covid-19 pandemic spread worldwide, FBI agents arrested five academic researchers, most of them charged with lying on visa applications. Trump administration officials believed the students were exploiting U.S. research to advance China's military. All pleaded not guilty.

The arrests prompted China to resuscitate secret prisoner-swap discussions with the U.S., which had gone silent in the pandemic. Beijing wanted its researchers back. Washington wanted its Americans—and the two Michaels.

A videoconference linked officials from the National Security Council, State Department and Justice Department with Chinese Foreign Ministry diplomats and the Ministry of Public Security. The U.S. insisted on using Microsoft Teams rather than Chinese software for the meeting.

"They are students," a Chinese Foreign Ministry official said. "They are just studying."

The U.S. offered to return the researchers, as well as speed up the deportation of Xu Guojun, the banker sought by China on corruption charges.

In return, the Americans wanted Kai Li, the businessman, and David Lin, the pastor, as well as Victor Liu and Cynthia Liu, American siblings blocked from leaving China since 2018. The U.S. also asked China to allow the exit of another three U.S. citizens, including two children.

The proposed exchange—seven Chinese for seven Americans, plus the two Canadians—would make it one of the largest prisoner swaps since the Cold War.

When U.S. officials raised the names of Messrs. Kovrig and Spavor, a Ministry of Public Security official said, "The Chinese people would not allow the Michaels to go home unless Madam Meng does."

A Justice Department official encouraged the Chinese officials to talk with Ms. Meng's lawyers about accepting the offer from federal prosecutors: freedom in exchange for an admission of wrongdoing. Persuade her to sign, the U.S. official said.

The talks fizzled. The U.S. wouldn't bring home the Americans without the two Canadians. Ms. Meng wasn't interested in the prosecutors' offer.

The Chinese executive told her lawyers she would never admit wrongdoing. She was willing to remain in Vancouver for years, if necessary, while her legal team fought the U.S. extradition. The company's reputation was at stake.

That summer, Huawei swept past Samsung Electronics Co. to become the world's top smartphone maker. As chief financial officer, Ms. Meng had to protect the empire her father had built.

But Huawei was already tipping.

Mr. Trump, who began referring to Huawei as "Spyway," signed off on new export restrictions in 2020 that blocked the company from buying computer chips produced with U.S. tools. The restrictions extended to manufacturers using American technology worldwide. Huawei started to run low on chips it needed to churn out smartphones, which made up around half its revenue.

Huawei also lost the license to load Google software on its phones and tablets. As sales plunged, Huawei considered shifting into electric cars.

Canada discussed the arrest of Messrs. Kovrig and Spavor at NATO counterintelligence briefings. Western leaders who spoke with Mr. Trudeau heard about the harrowing prison conditions endured by the two Michaels. Many of the details came from Ms. Nadjibulla.

One by one, the world's wealthiest countries gravitated toward the U.S. position and cut ties with Huawei.

In July 2020, the U.K. announced it would ban the company from its networks by 2027. Two weeks later, France said it would stop renewing licenses for Huawei 5G equipment, effectively barring the company. By October, the U.K. Parliament's defense committee said it would accelerate the Huawei ban.

Huawei's head of public affairs in North America, Vincent Peng, bounced between the U.S., Canada and China, scouting for lobbyists to reach lawmakers and diplomats to help free Ms. Meng.

Mr. Trump lost the 2020 presidential election in November, and as the clock ticked down to a new administration, Mr. Peng called Mr. Barton a few days before Christmas. He said Huawei was going to try its luck with Joe Biden.

Mr. Biden's first bilateral meeting as president was with Canada on Feb. 23, 2021. The first item on Mr. Trudeau's meeting agenda was the release of Messrs. Kovrig and Spavor. "These two guys are in prison," the prime minister said. "They are there because we are living up to our commitments to you....We need to get them out."

"I will not interfere with the judicial process," Mr. Biden replied. "Everything else, I am here for you."

Ms. Meng's detention was one area where Mr. Xi hoped he could reset U.S.-China relations under the new president. Yet from all appearances, the relationship remained volatile.

At a March 2021 meeting in Alaska, China's top diplomat, Yang Jiechi, publicly accused the U.S. of persuading other countries to attack China. In private, Secretary of State Antony Blinken brought up the two Michaels, saying serious countries don't kidnap people to use as bargaining chips.

That month, Messrs. Kovrig and Spavor were tried for espionage in closed-door hearings. Verdicts and sentences wouldn't be announced until later.

3 .TWO PRESIDENTS

As Mr. Biden took office, the Chinese leader came to see the case as an obstacle to restoring U.S.-China ties under the new administration. Mr. Xi felt his country had demonstrated sufficient resolve against Western provocation.

He tapped Xie Feng, a vice foreign minister, to bring the prisoner standoff to an end. Mr. Xi by then had sent more than 100 handwritten notes to underlings about Ms. Meng's case.

In July 2021, the Justice Department dropped charges against the five Chinese researchers, a decision that lowered tensions between the two countries. Days later, Mr. Xie joined a gathering of senior U.S. and Chinese officials in Tianjin, the first such meeting in more than three months.

Between testy exchanges about Covid-19 and human rights, Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman said her department wouldn't block Ms. Meng's return home if she settled with U.S. prosecutors.

That was the assurance Mr. Xie was seeking.

Two weeks after the Tianjin meeting, Mr. Barton learned that Mr. Spavor would be sentenced in Dandong. The ambassador's team invited diplomats from allied countries to gather at the courthouse. If Canada couldn't stop the sentencing, it wanted the world as a witness.

Mr. Barton was joined by diplomats from the U.S., Japan, Germany, Australia and New Zealand. In the courtroom, Mr. Barton opened a video call to the Canadian embassy in Beijing and narrated the proceedings.

The judge sentenced Mr. Spavor to an 11-year term for espionage, based on the number of incriminating photos authorities claimed they found on his phone. Mr. Barton called Mr. Spavor's family and then spoke to reporters.

"Our collective presence and voice sends a strong signal to China and the Chinese government that all the eyes of the world are watching," the ambassador said.

A month later, Mr. Barton was summoned to the U.S. Embassy safe room to read transcripts of a call between Messrs. Biden and Xi. The two leaders had again pressed each other to release the prisoners.

It was, according to Beijing, "the consensus of the two presidents."

Mr. Barton got an unexpected call while he was wrapping up a visit to an organization serving children with special needs in Qinghai, one of China's poorest provinces. An aide handed him a phone and said, "Xie Feng wants to speak to you now!" Mr. Barton stepped into a blue van.

Mr. Xie spoke through a translator and quizzed Mr. Barton over details for completing the deferred prosecution agreement with Ms. Meng. The snag was how the U.S. would characterize her wrongdoing. Mr. Barton relayed some potential wording, and Mr. Xie cut him off, breaking into English.

That's good, he said.

Ms. Meng wouldn't explicitly admit to lying—only that the statements she had made to HSBC were "untrue."

Mr. Barton plugged in a phone charger and called off his next visit. He kept Mr. Xie on the phone to go over logistics of a deal that could easily collapse. It all hinged on one overriding question: Would Xi Jinping approve?

The decision arrived in a handwritten note from the General Office of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party. Mr. Xi gave his consent.

On the evening of Sept. 19, one of Ms. Meng's new lawyers emailed a statement of facts to the Justice Department. The Huawei executive would concede that what she told the HSBC banker in 2013 was untrue.

Five days later, Ms. Meng joined a Brooklyn, N.Y., court hearing in a videoconference call from Vancouver. She pleaded not guilty to the indictment and accepted the deferred prosecution agreement.

The same day, Mr. Barton arrived for a prison visit with Mr. Kovrig. He learned he would speak to the two Michaels in video calls. Mr. Spavor had already arrived in Beijing by train.

“You will have the honor of telling them they’re going home,” a security official told Mr. Barton.

Messrs. Kovrig and Spavor appeared on the calls, one after the other. Mr. Barton tried to keep his voice from breaking in his call to Mr. Spavor.

“You’re going home,” he said.

Mr. Spavor looked bewildered.

“Are you serious?”

Nervous that any snag could derail the prisoner exchange, only a few select diplomats in Canada’s Beijing embassy knew what was afoot. Embassy staff worked out travel arrangements. A diplomat’s wife volunteered to bake peanut-butter cookies for the trip home.

In Vancouver, Ms. Meng and her lawyers had a 4 p.m. deadline on Sept. 24 to complete paperwork for the agreement with the Justice Department.

After the U.S. case was done, Canada invoked Section 23(3), the article allowing the government to terminate Ms. Meng’s custody.

In China, Messrs. Spavor and Kovrig, handcuffed and blindfolded, arrived at the Tianjin airport. Mr. Barton waited in the VIP lounge.

As the Canadians cleared the immigration checkpoint in China, officers at the Vancouver airport handed Ms. Meng her own freshly stamped passport. She hugged a lawyer and bid farewell to Chinese consular officers.

Ms. Meng learned during her flight that Messrs. Kovrig and Spavor had also been freed.

After a nighttime landing, Ms. Meng descended the airplane stairs at Shenzhen Bao’an International Airport. She wore a Chinese flag pinned to her red Carolina Herrera dress and waved to a waiting crowd. Projectors flashed her name across skyscrapers in Shenzhen.

From a red carpet placed on the tarmac for her arrival, Ms. Meng raised her hands in victory and thanked one person, Chinese leader Xi Jinping.

Messrs. Kovrig and Spavor touched down in Anchorage, Alaska. On the rain-washed runway, Mr. Kovrig bent to kiss the ground. Mr. Spavor joked they should hold their kisses until they reached Canada.

Mr. Trudeau and a small entourage greeted their return in Calgary, Mr. Spavor’s hometown. They were welcomed with to-go cups of Tim Hortons coffee.

Mr. Kovrig flew on to Toronto. Ms. Nadjibulla met him there, and they embraced beside a Royal Canadian Air Force jet.

The next day, China allowed the Liu siblings to return to the U.S.

Once home, Mr. Spavor found it hard to sleep in his own bed, having grown accustomed to contorting himself in a cell beside dozens of inmates. He remains in Canada and regularly speaks by phone with Mr. Barton.

Mr. Kovrig and Ms. Nadjibulla spent weeks together writing a book on the ordeal during stays in Spain, Canada and the Netherlands. They hope the book offers a road map for other prisoners and their families. Despite their divorce plans, they are in some ways closer now than ever, friends said.

Mr. Barton resigned his post as ambassador three months after the two Michaels returned home. He became chairman of Rio Tinto PLC, the Anglo-Australian mining conglomerate. China, long locked in a trade dispute with Australia, agreed last month to develop a \$2 billion iron-ore project with his new company.

Ms. Meng was recently promoted to a six-month rotation as Huawei's chairwoman. She no longer sets foot in Western countries.

The U.S. and Canada persuaded 66 other countries to sign a declaration against arbitrary detention to forestall similar international disputes.

The resurgence of what the U.S. has called hostage diplomacy—by China but also Iran, Venezuela, North Korea and Turkey—has reached such proportions that Mr. Biden this summer declared it a national emergency. He signed an executive order authorizing the U.S. to impose sanctions on anyone involved in wrongfully detaining Americans abroad.

Huawei has pleaded not guilty to the bank-fraud and other charges in the U.S. case. On Monday, prosecutors unsealed charges against two Chinese intelligence officers accused of trying to bribe a U.S. law-enforcement employee for confidential information about what people familiar with the case said was the Huawei investigation.

Canada in May declared Huawei a national security risk and banned it from building 5G networks in the country. It was a political decision, a Huawei spokesman said, resulting from U.S. pressure.

"We used to embrace the ideal of globalization and aspire to serve all mankind," Mr. Ren wrote in an August company memo. "What is our ideal now? Survive and earn some money wherever we can."

The company has since been expelled from most European and North American 5G networks.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 Close to 'irreversible' climate breakdown?
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/oct/27/world-close-to-irreversible-climate-breakdown-warn-major-studies
GIST	<p>The climate crisis has reached a "really bleak moment", one of the world's leading climate scientists has said, after a slew of major reports laid bare how close the planet is to catastrophe.</p> <p>Collective action is needed by the world's nations more now than at any point since the second world war to avoid climate tipping points, Prof Johan Rockström said, but geopolitical tensions are at a high.</p> <p>He said the world was coming "very, very close to irreversible changes ... time is really running out very, very fast".</p> <p>Emissions must fall by about half by 2030 to meet the internationally agreed target of 1.5C of heating but are still rising, the reports showed – at a time when oil giants are making astronomical amounts of money.</p> <p>On Thursday, Shell and TotalEnergies both doubled their quarterly profits to about \$10bn. Oil and gas giants have enjoyed soaring profits as post-Covid demand jumps and after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The sector is expected to amass \$4tn in 2022, strengthening calls for heavy windfall taxes to address the cost of living crisis and fund the clean energy transition.</p>

All three of the key UN agencies have produced damning reports in the last two days. The UN environment agency's report found there was [“no credible pathway to 1.5C in place”](#) and that “woefully inadequate” progress on cutting carbon emissions means the only way to limit the worst impacts of the climate crisis is a “rapid transformation of societies”.

Current pledges for action by 2030, even if delivered in full, would mean a rise in global heating of about 2.5C, a level that would condemn the world to catastrophic climate breakdown, [according to the UN's climate agency](#). Only a handful of countries have ramped up their plans in the last year, despite having [promised to do so at the Cop26 UN climate summit](#) in Glasgow last November.

The [UN's meteorological agency reported](#) that all the main heating gases hit record highs in 2021, with an alarming surge in [emissions of methane](#), a potent greenhouse gas.

Separately, the IEA's world energy report offered a glimmer of progress, that [CO2 from fossil fuels could peak by 2025](#) as high energy prices push nations towards clean energy, though it warned that it would not be enough to avoid severe climate impacts.

Rockström, director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research in Germany, said: “It's a really bleak moment, not only because of the reports showing that emissions are still rising, so we're not delivering on either the Paris or Glasgow climate agreements, but we also have so much scientific evidence that we are very, very close to irreversible changes – we're coming closer to tipping points.”

Research by Rockström and colleagues, published in September, found [five dangerous climate tipping points may already have been passed](#) due to the global heating caused by humanity to date, including the collapse of Greenland's ice cap, with another five possible with 1.5C of heating.

“Furthermore, the world is unfortunately in a geopolitically unstable state,” said Rockström. “So when we need collective action at the global level, probably more than ever since the second world war, to keep the planet stable, we have an all-time low in terms of our ability to collectively act together.”

“Time is really running out very, very fast,” he said. “I must say, in my professional life as a climate scientist, this is a low point. The window for 1.5C is shutting as I speak, so it's really tough.”

His remarks came after the UN secretary general, António Guterres, said on Wednesday that climate action was “falling pitifully short”. “We are headed for a global catastrophe [and] for economy-destroying levels of global heating.”

He added: [“Droughts, floods, storms and wildfires](#) are devastating lives and livelihoods across the globe [and] getting worse by the day. We need climate action on all fronts and we need it now.” He said the G20 nations, responsible for 80% of emissions, must lead the way.

Inger Andersen, head of the UN environment programme (UNEP), told the Guardian that the energy crisis must be used to speed up delivery of a low-carbon economy: “We are in danger of missing the opportunity and a crisis is a terrible thing to waste.”

Prof Corinne Le Quéré, at the University of East Anglia, UK, said: “It is fundamental to avoid cascading risks that responses to existing crises are made in a way that limits climate change to the lowest possible level.”

Further reports published in the last two days said the [health of the world's people is at the mercy of a global addiction to fossil fuels](#), with increasing heat deaths, hunger and infectious disease as the climate crisis intensifies.

In the UK, the government was accused of a [“severe dereliction of duty” in leaving critical UK infrastructure](#) at risk to climate impacts. The new prime minister, [Rishi Sunak, will not attend COP27](#), his spokesman said on Wednesday.

High gas and oil prices delivered huge profits to Shell and TotalEnergies on Wednesday, which [booked \\$9.5bn](#) and [\\$9.9bn](#) respectively. Shell said it would not pay any UK-imposed windfall tax this year as the profits were being offset against investment in North Sea fields.

The fossil fuel industry as a whole amassed \$4tn in 2022, according to another new report from International [Energy](#) Agency (IEA), a sum that could otherwise transform climate action.

The IEA report said: “Net income for the world’s oil and gas producers is set to double in 2022 to an unprecedented \$4tn, a huge \$2tn windfall.” The oil and gas sector has gained an average of [\\$1tn a year in unearned profits](#) for the last 50 years.

The IEA said clean energy investment would have to be at least \$4tn a year by 2030 to hit net zero emissions by mid-century. “If the global oil and gas industry were to invest this [\$2tn] additional income in low-emissions fuels, such as hydrogen and biofuels, it would fund all of the investment needed in these fuels for the remainder of this decade.”

Prof Myles Allen, at the University of Oxford, said: “The combined profits, taxes and royalties generated by the oil and gas industry over the past few months would be enough to capture every single molecule of CO2 produced by their activities and reinject it back underground. So why are we only talking about transforming society and not about obliging a highly profitable industry to clean up the mess caused by the products it sells?”

“The situation is serious and bleak,” said Prof Simon Lewis, at University College London. “Shell has made £26bn profit this year, carbon emissions are back at pre-pandemic levels, while 53,000 people died of heat stress in Europe in the summer, and floods have displaced millions from Nigeria to Pakistan. The solution is to do everything we can to defeat the fossil fuel industry – they stand between us all and a prosperous future.”

Rockström was pessimistic about any breakthrough in the speed of climate action at the Cop27 climate summit, which he said would be dominated by nations such as Pakistan demanding funding to rebuild their countries after climate disasters. Rich, high-emitting nations have long rejected such claims, fearing unlimited liabilities.

“This is a necessary discussion,” Rockström said. “But it leads to a deeper rift between the global north and the south. And that’s exactly what we do not need now.”

But he said progress could be made within a few years: “The Ukraine war is the nail in the coffin for the fossil-fuel-driven advanced economies. In the short term, it costs us a lot and we lose speed on climate action.” But in the longer term, he said, the energy and food crises add national security to the planetary and health reasons for climate action.

Prof Michael Mann, at the University of Pennsylvania in the US, said it was important to note that progress was being made: “More work clearly needs to be done if warming is to be kept below 1.5C, but nobody foresaw the major policy progress in recent months in both Australia and the US. It is estimated that the US legislation will lower national emissions by 40% this decade. With US leadership, we can expect other major emitters to now come to the table at Cop27.”

Climate experts agree that every action that limits global heating reduces the suffering endured by people from climate impacts. “The 1.5C target is now near impossible, but every fraction of a degree will equate to massive avoided damages for generations to come,” said Prof Dave Reay, at the University of Edinburgh, UK.

Röckstrom said: “Despite the fact that the situation is depressing and very challenging, I would strongly advise everyone to act in business or policy or society or science. The deeper we fall into the dark abyss of

	risk, the more we have to make efforts to climb out of that hole. It's not as if we don't know what to do — it's rather that we're not doing what is necessary.”
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/26 New climate reality coming into view
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/10/26/magazine/climate-change-warming-world.html
GIST	<p>You can never really see the future, only imagine it, then try to make sense of the new world when it arrives.</p> <p>Just a few years ago, climate projections for this century looked quite apocalyptic, with most scientists warning that continuing “business as usual” would bring the world four or even five degrees Celsius of warming — a change disruptive enough to call forth not only predictions of food crises and heat stress, state conflict and economic strife, but, from some corners, warnings of civilizational collapse and even a sort of human endgame. (Perhaps you’ve had nightmares about each of these and seen premonitions of them in your newsfeed.)</p> <p>Now, with the world already 1.2 degrees hotter, scientists believe that warming this century will most likely fall between two or three degrees. (A United Nations report released this week ahead of the COP27 climate conference in Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt, confirmed that range.) A little lower is possible, with much more concerted action; a little higher, too, with slower action and bad climate luck. Those numbers may sound abstract, but what they suggest is this: Thanks to astonishing declines in the price of renewables, a truly global political mobilization, a clearer picture of the energy future and serious policy focus from world leaders, we have cut expected warming almost in half in just five years.</p> <p>For decades, visions of possible climate futures have been anchored by, on the one hand, Pollyanna-like faith that normality would endure, and on the other, millenarian intuitions of an ecological end of days, during which perhaps billions of lives would be devastated or destroyed. More recently, these two stories have been mapped onto climate modeling: Conventional wisdom has dictated that meeting the most ambitious goals of the Paris agreement by limiting warming to 1.5 degrees could allow for some continuing normal, but failing to take rapid action on emissions, and allowing warming above three or even four degrees, spelled doom.</p> <p>Neither of those futures looks all that likely now, with the most terrifying predictions made improbable by decarbonization and the most hopeful ones practically foreclosed by tragic delay. The window of possible climate futures is narrowing, and as a result, we are getting a clearer sense of what’s to come: a new world, full of disruption but also billions of people, well past climate normal and yet mercifully short of true climate apocalypse.</p> <p>Over the last several months, I’ve had dozens of conversations — with climate scientists and economists and policymakers, advocates and activists and novelists and philosophers — about that new world and the ways we might conceptualize it. Perhaps the most capacious and galvanizing account is one I heard from Kate Marvel of NASA, a lead chapter author on the fifth National Climate Assessment: “The world will be what we make it.” Personally, I find myself returning to three sets of guideposts, which help map the landscape of possibility.</p> <p>First, worst-case temperature scenarios that recently seemed plausible now look much less so, which is inarguably good news and, in a time of climate panic and despair, a truly underappreciated sign of genuine and world-shaping progress.</p> <p>Second, and just as important, the likeliest futures still lie beyond thresholds long thought disastrous, marking a failure of global efforts to limit warming to “safe” levels. Through decades of only minimal action, we have squandered that opportunity. Perhaps even more concerning, the more we are learning about even relatively moderate levels of warming, the harsher and harder to navigate they seem. In a news release accompanying its report, the United Nations predicted that a world more than two degrees warmer would lead to “endless suffering.”</p>

Third, humanity retains an enormous amount of control — over just how hot it will get and how much we will do to protect one another through those assaults and disruptions. Acknowledging that truly apocalyptic warming now looks considerably less likely than it did just a few years ago pulls the future out of the realm of myth and returns it to the plane of history: contested, combative, combining suffering and flourishing — though not in equal measure for every group.

It isn't easy to process this picture very cleanly, in part because climate action remains an open question, in part because it is so hard to balance the scale of climate transformation against possible human response and in part because we can no longer so casually use those handy narrative anchors of apocalypse and normality. But in narrowing our range of expected climate futures, we've traded one set of uncertainties, about temperature rise, for another about politics and other human feedbacks. We know a lot more now about how much warming to expect, which makes it more possible to engineer a response. That response still begins with cutting emissions, but it is no longer reasonable to believe that it can end there. A politics of decarbonization is evolving into a politics beyond decarbonization, incorporating matters of adaptation and finance and justice (among other issues). If the fate of the world and the climate has long appeared to hinge on the project of decarbonization, a clearer path to two or three degrees of warming means that it also now depends on what is built on the other side. Which is to say: It depends on a new and more expansive climate politics.

"We live in a terrible world, and we live in a wonderful world," Marvel says. "It's a terrible world that's more than a degree Celsius warmer. But also a wonderful world in which we have so many ways to generate electricity that are cheaper and more cost-effective and easier to deploy than I would've ever imagined. People are writing credible papers in scientific journals making the case that switching rapidly to renewable energy isn't a net cost; it will be a net financial benefit," she says with a head-shake of near-disbelief. "If you had told me five years ago that that would be the case, I would've thought, wow, that's a miracle."

How did it happen? To begin with, the world started to shift away from coal.

In 2014, the energy researcher and podcast producer Justin Ritchie was a Ph.D. student wondering why many climate models were predicting that the 21st century would look like a coal boom. Everyone knew about the decades of coal-powered economic growth in China, but those working closely on the future of energy had already grown somewhat skeptical that the same model would be deployed across the developing world — and even more skeptical that the rich nations of the world would ever return to coal in a sustained way.

But that perspective was nowhere to be seen in the huge set of models, mixing economic and demographic and material assumptions about the trajectory of the future, which climate scientists used to project impacts later this century, including for the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (I.P.C.C.). The most conspicuous example was an emissions pathway called RCP8.5, which required at least a fivefold growth of coal use over the course of the 21st century. Because it was the darkest available do-nothing path, RCP8.5 was reflexively called, in the scientific literature and by journalists covering it, "business as usual." When Ritchie and his doctoral adviser published their research in *Energy Economics* in 2017, they [chose a leading subtitle](#): "Are Cases of Vastly Expanded Future Coal Combustion Still Plausible?" The world's current path appears to offer a quite simple answer: no.

Questions about the future course of coal had been circulating for years, often raised by the same people who would point out that projections for renewable energy kept also comically underestimating the growth of wind and solar power. But to a striking degree, broad skepticism about high-end emissions scenarios has come from a small handful of people who read Ritchie's work and took to Twitter with it: Ritchie's sometime co-author Roger Pielke Jr., a professor of environmental studies and frequent Republican witness at congressional climate hearings; the outspoken British investor Michael Liebreich, who founded a clean-energy advisory group bought by Michael Bloomberg, and who spent a good deal of 2019 yelling on social media that "RCP8.5 is bollox"; and the more mild-mannered climate scientists Zeke Hausfather

and Glen Peters, who together [published a 2020 comment in Nature](#) declaring that “the ‘business as usual’ story is misleading.” ([I published a piece](#) the previous year picking up the same bread crumbs.)

Adjustments to the input assumptions of energy models are perhaps not the sexiest signs of climate action, but Hausfather estimates that about half of our perceived progress has come from revising these trajectories downward, with the other half coming from technology, markets and public policy.

Let’s take technology first. Among energy nerds, the story is well known, but almost no one outside that insular world appreciates just how drastic and rapid the cost declines of renewable technologies have been — a story almost as astonishing and perhaps as consequential as the invention within weeks and rollout within months of new mRNA vaccines to combat a global pandemic.

Since 2010, the cost of solar power and lithium-battery technology has fallen by more than 85 percent, the cost of wind power by more than 55 percent. The International Energy Agency [recently predicted that solar power](#) would become “the cheapest source of electricity in history,” and [a report by Carbon Tracker](#) found that 90 percent of the global population lives in places where new renewable power would be cheaper than new dirty power. The price of gas was under \$3 per gallon in 2010, which means these decreases are the equivalent of seeing gas-station signs today advertising prices of under 50 cents a gallon.

The markets have taken notice. This year, investment in green energy surpassed that in fossil fuels, despite the scramble for gas and the “return to coal” prompted by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. After a decade of declines, supply-chain issues have nudged up the cost of renewable manufacturing, but overall the trends are clear enough that you can read them without glasses: Globally, there are enough solar-panel factories being built to produce the necessary energy to limit warming to below two degrees, and in the United States, planned solar farms now exceed today’s total worldwide operating capacity. Liebreich has taken to speculating about a “renewable singularity,” beyond which the future of energy is utterly transformed.

The world looks almost as different for politics and policy. Five years ago, almost no one had heard of Greta Thunberg or the Fridays for Future school strikers, Extinction Rebellion or the Sunrise Movement. There wasn’t serious debate about the Green New Deal or the European Green Deal, or even whispers of Fit for 55 or the Inflation Reduction Act or the Chinese promise to peak emissions by 2030. There were climate-change skeptics in some very conspicuous positions of global power. Hardly any country in the world was talking seriously about eliminating emissions, only reducing them, and many weren’t even talking all that seriously about that. Today more than 90 percent of the world’s G.D.P. and over 80 percent of global emissions are now governed by net-zero pledges of various kinds, each promising thorough decarbonization at historically unprecedented speeds.

At this point, they are mostly paper pledges, few of them binding enough in the short term to look like real action plans rather than strategies of smiling delay. And yet it still marks a new era for climate action that a vast majority of world leaders have felt pressed to make them — by the force of protest, public anxiety and voter pressure, and increasingly by the powerful logic of national self-interest. What used to look like a moral burden is now viewed increasingly as an opportunity, so much so that it has become a source of geopolitical rivalry. As prime minister, Boris Johnson talked about making the United Kingdom the “Saudi Arabia of wind power,” and the Inflation Reduction Act was written to supercharge American competitiveness on green energy. China, which is already installing nearly as much renewable capacity as the rest of the world combined, is also manufacturing 85 percent of the world’s solar panels (and selling about half of all electric vehicles purchased worldwide). According to one recent paper on the energy transition [published in Joule](#), a faster decarbonization path could make the world trillions of dollars richer by 2050.

You can’t take these projections to the bank. But they have already put us on a different path. The Stanford scientist Marshall Burke, who has produced some distressing research about the costs of warming — that global G.D.P. could be cut by as much as a quarter, compared with a world without climate change — says he has had to update the slides he uses to teach undergraduates, revising his expectations from just a few

years ago. “The problem is a result of human choices, and our progress on it is also the result of human choices,” he says. “And those should be celebrated. It’s not yet sufficient. But it is amazing.”

Matthew Huber of Purdue University, the climate scientist who helped introduce the idea of a temperature and humidity limit to human survival, likewise describes himself as considerably less worried than he used to be, though he believes, drawing on inferences from the deep history of the planet, that a future of two degrees warming is less likely than a world of three. “Some of my colleagues are looking at three degrees and going, oh, my God, this is the worst thing ever — we’re failing!” he says. “And then someone like me is saying, well, I used to think we were heading to five. So three looks like a win.”

A very bruising win. “The good news is we have implemented policies that are significantly bringing down the projected global average temperature change,” says the Canadian atmospheric scientist Katharine Hayhoe, a lead chapter author on several National Climate Assessments and an evangelical Christian who has gained a reputation as a sort of climate whisperer to the center-right. The bad news, she says, is that we have been “systematically underestimating the rate and magnitude of extremes.” Even if temperature rise is limited to two degrees, she says, “the extremes might be what you would have projected for four to five.”

“Things are coming through faster and more severely,” agrees the British economist Nicholas Stern, who led a major 2006 review of climate risk. In green technology, he says, “we hold the growth story of the 21st century in our hands.” But he worries about the future of the Amazon, the melting of carbon-rich permafrost in the northern latitudes and the instability of the ice sheets — each a tipping point that “could start running away from us.” “Each time you get an I.P.C.C. report, it’s still worse than you thought, even though you thought it was very bad,” he says. “The human race doesn’t, as it were, collapse at two degrees, but you probably will see a lot of death, a lot of movement of people, a lot of conflict over space and water.”

“I mean, we’re at not even one and a half now, and a third of Pakistan is underwater, right?” says the Nigerian American philosopher Olufemi O. Taiwo, who has spent much of the last few years writing about climate justice in the context of reparations for slavery and colonialism. “What we’re seeing now at less than two degrees — there’s nothing optimistic about that.”

All of which suggests an entirely different view of the near future, equally true. The world will keep warming, and the impacts will grow more punishing, even if decarbonization accelerates enough to meet the world’s most ambitious goals: nearly halving global emissions by 2030 and getting to net-zero just two decades later. “These dates — 2030, 2050 — they are meaningless,” says Gail Bradbrook, one of the British founders of Extinction Rebellion. “What matters is the amount of carbon in the atmosphere, and there is already way too much. The dates can be excuses to kick the problem into the long grass. But the important thing is that we’re doing harm, right now, and that we should stop absolutely as soon as possible with any activities that are making the situation worse.”

A lot, then, depends on perspective: The climate future looks darker than today but brighter than many expected not that long ago. The world is moving faster to decarbonize than it once seemed responsible to imagine, and yet not nearly fast enough to avert real turbulence. Even the straightest path to two degrees looks tumultuous, with disruptions from the natural world sufficient to call into question many of the social and political continuities that have been taken for granted for generations.

For me, the last few years provide arguments for both buoyant optimism and abject despair. They have made me more mindful of the inescapable challenge of uncertainty when it comes to projecting the future, and the necessity of nevertheless operating within it.

In 2017, I wrote [a long and bleak magazine article](#) about worst-case scenarios for the climate, focused on a range of possible futures that began at four degrees Celsius of warming and went up from there. In 2019, I [published a book](#) about the disruptions and transformations projected by scientists for lower but still “catastrophic” levels of warming — between two degrees and four. I was called an alarmist, and rightly so — like a growing number of people following the news, I was alarmed.

I am still. How could I not be? How could you not be? In Delhi this spring, there were 78 days when temperatures breached 100 degrees Fahrenheit, a monthslong heat event made 30 times more likely by climate change. Drought across the Northern Hemisphere was made 20 times more likely, resulting in dried-up riverbeds from the Yangtze to the Danube to the Colorado, exposing corpses dumped in Lake Mead and dinosaur footprints in Texas and live World War II munitions in Germany and a “Spanish Stonehenge” in Guadalperal, and baking crops in agricultural regions on multiple continents to the point of at least partial failure. Hundreds died of heat just in Phoenix, more than a thousand each in England and Portugal and Spain.

Monsoon flooding in Pakistan covered a third of the country for weeks, displacing tens of millions of people, destroying the country’s cotton and rice yields and producing conditions ripe for migration, conflict and infectious disease within an already struggling state — a state that has generated in its entire industrial history about the same carbon emissions as the United States belched out this year alone. In the Caribbean and the Pacific, tropical storms grew into intense cyclones in under 36 hours.

In China, there were months of intense heat for which, as one meteorologist memorably put it, “there is nothing in world climatic history which is even minimally comparable.” As it did through the pandemic, China tried to hide most of the disruptions to daily life, but industrial shutdowns meant the rest of the world felt the effects in the supply chains for semiconductors, pharmaceuticals, photovoltaic cells, iPhones and Teslas — all pinched briefly closed by warming of just 1.2 degrees.

What will the world look like at two degrees? There will be extreme weather even more intense and much more frequent. Disruption and upheaval, at some scale, at nearly every level, from the microbial to the geopolitical. Suffering and injustice for hundreds of millions of people, because the benefits of industrial activity have accumulated in parts of the world that will also be spared the worst of its consequences.

Innovation, too, including down paths hard to imagine today, and some new prosperity, if less than would have been expected in the absence of warming. Normalization of larger and more costly disasters, and perhaps an exhaustion of empathy in the face of devastation in the global south, leading to the kind of sociopathic distance that enables parlor-game conversations like this one.

At two degrees, in many parts of the world, floods that used to hit once a century [would come every single year](#), and those that came once a century would be beyond all historical experience. Wildfire risk would grow, and wildfire smoke, too. (The number of people exposed to extreme smoke days in the American West [has already grown 27-fold](#) in the last decade.) Extreme heat events could grow more than three times more likely, globally, and the effects would be uneven: In India, by the end of the century, there would be 30 times as many severe heat waves as today, [according to one estimate](#). Ninety-three times as many people would be exposed there to dangerous heat.

This is what now counts as progress. Today, at just 1.2 degrees, the planet is already warmer than it has been in the entire history of human civilization, already beyond the range of temperatures that gave rise to everything we have ever known as a species. Passing 1.5 and then two degrees of warming will plot a course through a truly foreign climate, bringing a level of environmental disruption that scientists have called “dangerous” when they are being restrained. Island nations of the world have called it “genocide,” and African diplomats have called it “certain death.” It is that level that the world’s scientists had in mind when [they warned, in the latest I.P.C.C. report](#), published in February, that “any further delay in concerted global action will miss a brief and rapidly closing window to secure a livable future.”

What would we get if that window closes? The temptations of apocalyptic thinking aside, it would nevertheless be a world in which we would still be living — navigating larger and more damaging climate intrusions, and doing so with some yet-to-be-determined mix of success and failure, grief and opportunity. “The West has always had a problem with millenarianism — the fall, Christianity, all that,” says Tim Sahay, a Mumbai-born climate-policy wonk and co-founder of the new Polycrisis journal. “It’s ineradicable — all we see are the possibilities for doom and gloom.” The challenges are real and large and fall disproportionately on the developing world, he says, but they are not deterministic, or need not be.

“We’re riding down the dark mountain,” he says. “That’s scary in ways, of course, but there are also so many possible outcomes. I find it all exciting. What kind of cities will Brazil build? What will Indonesia be?”

In some places, climate rhetoric has begun to soften — or perhaps it is better to say harden, with existential abstractions thickening into something more like high-stakes realism. Mohamed Nasheed, the former president of Maldives who asked, at the Copenhagen climate conference in 2009, “How can you ask my country to go extinct?” has been lately talking in more practical terms. He has raised the need to secure climate finance — support from development banks and institutions of the global north to enable a green transition and local resilience — and theorized about the possible need for debt strikes to extract meaningful relief. He has also encouraged the work of scientists to genetically modify local coral to make it more resilient in the face of warming water.

[Mia Mottley, the prime minister of Barbados, is fighting](#) in the weeds with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, and trying to get other vulnerable nations to play hardball too. [Greta Thunberg](#), the unyielding face of climate alarm, recently affirmed her support for at least existing nuclear power, and Rupert Read, once the spokesman for Extinction Rebellion, has taken to calling for a “moderate flank” of the climate movement. In the United States, the climate bill that emerged finally into law was not a Green New Deal, a punitive carbon tax or a program of demand reduction but an expansive, incentive-based approach to decarbonizing that included support for nuclear power and even carbon capture, long an anathema to the climate left.

This may look like a growing consensus, which to a certain extent it is. But the world it points to is still a quite unresolved mess. Over the last year, the economic historian Adam Tooze has popularized the word “polycrisis” to describe the cascade of large-scale challenges to the basic stability and continuity of the global order. President Emmanuel Macron of France, who embodies the slim-fit optimism of neoliberalism, has declared the current period of tumult “the end of abundance.” Josep Borrell, the former head of the European Parliament, chose the phrase “radical uncertainty,” later comparing Europe to a “garden” and the rest of the world to a “jungle” and warning that “the jungle could invade the garden.”

John Kerry, the American climate envoy, has acknowledged, perhaps inadvertently, that the cost of climate damage in the global south is already in the “trillions” — a number he cited not to illustrate the need for support but to explain why nations in the global north wouldn’t pay. (He added that he refused to feel guilty about it.) The author and activist Bill McKibben worries that although the transition is accelerating to once-unimaginable speeds, it still won’t come fast enough. “The danger is that you have a world that runs on sun and wind but is still an essentially broken planet.” Now the most pressing question is whether it can be fixed — whether we can manage those disruptions and protect the many millions of people who might be hurt by them.

Next month, at the United Nations climate conference in Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt, known as COP27, world leaders will take up that question, which often goes by the name “adaptation.” Having engineered global ecological disruption, can we engineer our way out of its path?

The tools are many — in fact, close to infinite. Given that most of the world’s infrastructure was built for climate conditions we have already left behind, protecting ourselves against new conditions would require something like a global construction project: defenses against flooding — both natural, like mangrove and wetland restoration, and more interventionist, like dikes and levees and sea walls and sea gates. We’ll need stronger housing codes; more resilient building materials and more weather-conscious urban planning; heat-resistant rail lines and asphalt and all other kinds of infrastructure; better forecasting and more universal warning systems; less wasteful water management, including across very large agricultural regions like the American West; cooling centers and drought-resistant crops and much more effective investments in emergency response for what Juliette Kayyem, a former official at the Department of Homeland Security, calls our new “age of disasters.”

Damage from storms is increasing, in large part because we keep building and moving right into what is often called the expanding bull’s-eye of extreme weather, with the same distressing pattern observed in

boom towns along the Florida coast and in the floodplains of Bangladesh. More and more people are flocking into harm's way, not all of them out of true ignorance.

Some more sanguine climate observers often point out that even as we put ourselves in the path of extreme weather, deaths from natural disasters are not, in fact, growing — [indeed, they have fallen](#), by an astonishing degree, from as much as an average of 500,000 deaths each year a century ago to about 50,000 deaths each year today (even as climate- and weather-related natural disasters have increased fivefold, [according to the World Meteorological Organization](#)).

But whether those mortality trends would continue in a two-degree world is unclear. With Hurricane Ian, for instance, a wealthy and well-prepared corner of the global north just endured its deadliest hurricane since 1935. Most of that drastic drop in disaster mortality happened, in fact, between the 1920s and the 1970s, when such deaths fell to just under 100,000. The declines have been smaller over the last 50 years, as global warming began to destabilize our weather, and even smaller — perhaps even nonexistent, depending on the data set and how you want to look at it — over the last three decades, as temperature rise became more pronounced and warming pushed the world outside the “Goldilocks” climate range that had governed all of human history.

Perhaps this means the world has harvested much of the obvious low-hanging fruit of adaptation. Better meteorology and early warning systems, for instance, which have drastically reduced the death toll of recent monsoons in Bangladesh and hurricanes in Florida, are already in place. The cost of global climate damage has already run into the trillions, and the bill for adaptation in the developing world could reach \$300 billion annually by 2030. Galveston, Texas, is undertaking the construction of a \$31 billion “Ike Dike” project to protect its harbor; New York City is considering a system of storm-surge gates, priced at \$52 billion. In other words, warming is already making adaptation harder and more expensive, and extending the gains achieved last century into the next one may prove difficult or even impossible.

[The latest I.P.C.C. report](#), published in February, emphasized that “progress in adaptation planning and implementation” had been made but also warned that “many initiatives prioritize immediate and near-term climate risk reduction which reduces the opportunity for transformational adaptation,” meaning that resources devoted to repair and retrofitting aren't being spent on new infrastructure or resettlement. “Hard limits to adaptation have already been reached in some ecosystems,” the I.P.C.C. wrote, adding that “with increasing global warming, losses and damages will increase and additional natural and human systems will reach adaptation limits.”

“For me, what we are witnessing at the present level of warming, it is already challenging the limits to adaptation for humans,” says Fahad Saeed of Climate Analytics. Over the last six months, Saeed, a Pakistani scientist based in Islamabad, has watched the country endure months of extreme heat, crop failures and monsoon flooding that submerged a third of the nation, destroyed a million homes, displaced 30 million people and inflicted damage estimated at \$40 billion or above — 11 percent of Pakistan's 2021 G.D.P. “One can't believe what would happen at 1.5 degrees,” he says. “Anything beyond that? It would even be more devastating.”

“Two degrees is a lot better than four degrees,” says the climate scientist Michael Oppenheimer, one of those who delivered now-legendary warnings about the risks of warming to the U.S. Senate in 1988. “And one-and-a-half degrees is even better than two degrees. But none of those levels means there's nothing to do.”

Oppenheimer has spent the last few years increasingly focused on the question of what to do, and how to judge our progress on adaptation. “How good are we today at dealing with the situation where hundred-year floods happen?” he asks. “Not very good.” He argues that we should try to hold ourselves to higher standards than normalizing more than a hundred deaths in a Florida hurricane. Extreme events are arriving now much more quickly, meaning that “the measure of success is no longer just how well you did in preparing for some bad event and then recovering from it. It's also how quickly you do it.” He mentions [the I.P.C.C.'s 2019 report on the oceans](#), which found that what were once called “hundred-year flood levels” would be reached, in many parts of the world, every single year by 2050. “And so you've got

to get back in shape before the next one happens, when the next one might happen the same year — in the worst cases, the same month. Eventually, in some places, it happens just with the high tide.”

“You’re not going to just recover the way we think of recovery now,” Oppenheimer says. “You have to either be living in a totally different situation, which accepts something close to perpetual flooding in some places, or you fulfill the dreams some people have about adaptation, where the regularity of life is just totally different. The very structure of infrastructure and manufacturing, it’s all different.”

Talk enough about adaptation, and you drift into technical-seeming matters: Can new dikes be built, or the most vulnerable communities resettled? Can crop lands be moved, and new drought-resistant seeds developed? Can cooling infrastructure offset the risks of new heat extremes, and early warning systems protect human life from natural disaster? How much help can innovation be expected to provide in dealing with environmental challenges never seen before in human history?

But perhaps the more profound questions are about distribution: Who gets those seeds? Who manages to build those dikes? Who is exposed when they fail or go unbuilt? And what is the fate of those most frontally assaulted by warming? The political discourse orbiting these issues is known loosely as “climate justice”: To what extent will climate change harden and deepen already unconscionable levels of global inequality, and to what degree can the countries of the global south engineer and exit from the already oppressive condition that the scholar Farhana Sultana has called “climate coloniality”?

“The big thing politically that’s going to happen on a massive scale is movement,” says Taiwo, the philosopher. “The numbers I’ve seen for displacement — both internal displacement and cross-border displacement at two degrees — are at least in the tens if not the hundreds of millions. And I don’t think we have a political context for what that means.”

The range of estimates is huge, and its size is among the best indicators we have that, however much we know about the climate future, an enormous amount of the complex and cascading effects of warming remains shrouded in the inevitable uncertainty of human response. Indeed, the I.P.C.C. says that, in the near term, migration will most likely be driven more by socioeconomic conditions and governance issues. “There will be, let’s say, socioecological pressure on a scale that is an order of magnitude larger than the scale of what we’re seeing now,” Taiwo says. “Whether that translates into movement within borders and across borders, whether it translates into large-scale adaptation strategies that we don’t have a political context for, whether it translates into simply mass death we don’t have a context for, either, or some mix of those things — it’s anybody’s guess. And I wouldn’t trust a climate model to tell me which of those things, or which mix of those things, is going to happen.”

Taiwo says his mind drifts intuitively toward one scenario. “If the far right wins,” he says, “I see copycat agencies that are much like ICE operating in much of the global north and in some emerging states. I see a gradual integration of domestic policing and, for lack of a better term, border policing — which I think we’re seeing now anyway, a much more openly authoritarian development of those institutions, increasingly operating autonomously. I expect the militaries of nation states to increasingly be wedded to those operations. And I expect that to become ‘government’ for a substantial percentage of the world’s population. I likewise expect that to be a political shift that we do not have a context for.” Unless you’ve studied colonialism, he laughs.

“But maybe there’s another version of what that mix of pressures looks like at two degrees Celsius,” Taiwo says, one that produces more local resilience and sustainability, along with innovation in energy and politics, agriculture and culture. “And partially because of the success of a few of these measures,” he says, “you get markedly lower than predicted displacement numbers.”

For a generation now, climate-vulnerable countries have issued a series of variations on a simple exhortatory theme: For this damage, the rich world must pay. The call has gone by different names, each describing slightly different forms of support: “climate finance,” “loss and damage,” “reparations” and now “debt relief.” In 2009, in Copenhagen, the rich nations of the world formalized a promise to deliver

\$100 billion annually in climate funding to the global south, a promise that has yet to be fulfilled, even as climate-vulnerable nations have raised their request to \$700 billion or more.

“It’s not only about adapting,” says the Kenyan climate activist Elizabeth Wathuti, “because you cannot ask people to adapt to losing their homes — their homes are being washed away, their livestock and their children are being carried away. They’re dying — how would they adapt to that? And crop failure — how would you adapt to that? How would you adapt to starvation? If you have not had a meal in two days, you will not adapt to that.”

“For years and years — decades and decades — people have been begging,” Taiwo says. “The deciding thing will be, what is it that global south countries are prepared to do if these demands aren’t met.”

Sahay, of the Polycrisis journal, offers one answer, describing a world in which climate-exacerbated great power rivalry means that alliances of underdeveloped states could play rich nations against one another, in a sort of spiritual extension of the nonalignment movement, led by Indonesia, in the last decades of the Cold War. Sahay calls the emerging nonalignment alliance built around Brazil, Russia, India and China (BRIC) a “new bargaining chip,” floating the possibility that a new group of “electro-states” could succeed the last century’s petro-states and aggressively broker access to their own mineral resources. The scholar Thea Riofrancos has similarly imagined a “Lithium OPEC,” and though she doubts it will come entirely to pass, she believes that a harder and more nationalistic resource geopolitics surely will.

“Westerners take it for granted that people in the global south, if they’re badly hit by some climate-change event, will attack fossil fuels,” says the Indian novelist Amitav Ghosh, also the author of several piercing meditations on the injustices of warming. “But that’s a complete fantasy. In the global south, everybody understands that energy access is the difference between poverty and not poverty. Nobody sees fossil fuels as the basic problem. They see the West’s profligate use of fossil fuels as the basic problem.”

“Throughout this whole crisis in Pakistan, have you heard of anyone talking about attacking fossil fuels? No — it’s laughable to even ask. Everything I see being mentioned about Pakistan is about reparations, it’s about global inequality, it’s about historic government injustices. It’s not at all about fossil fuels. This is one of the really big divides between the global south and the global north,” Ghosh says. “If people are going to attack anything — let’s say in Pakistan or India after a heat wave or some other catastrophic event — it won’t be the fossil-fuel infrastructure. It will be the consulates of the rich countries, just as it’s been over many other things in the past.”

“We live in an unimaginable future,” says the writer Rebecca Solnit, who has grown increasingly focused on the political and social challenges of climate change. “Things thought impossible or inconceivable or unlikely not very long ago are accepted norms now.” Today, as a result, “a lot of my hope is just radical uncertainty,” she says. “You see that the world can’t go on as it is — that is true. But it doesn’t mean the world can’t go on. It means that the world will go on, not as it is but in some unimaginably transformed way.”

In 2017, looking back at decades of ineffectual organizing, I didn’t think the political mobilization of the last five years was even possible, and if you had told me then about the radical acceleration of renewable technology to come, I would’ve been more credulous but still surprised. But signs of optimism are not arguments for complacency — quite the opposite, because the new range of expectations is not just a marker of how much has changed over the last five years but of how much might over the next five, the next 25 or the next 50.

Two degrees is not inevitable; both better and worse outcomes are possible. Most recent analyses project paths forward from current policy about half a degree warmer, meaning much more must be done to meet that goal, and even more to keep the world below the two-degree threshold — as was promised under the Paris agreement. (Even the I.P.C.C. scenarios designed to limit warming to that level now predict we’ll trespass it as soon as next decade.) And because decarbonization might stall and the climate may prove more sensitive than expected, temperatures above three degrees, though less likely than they recently seemed, remain possible, too.

Overall emissions have not yet begun to decline, and it's a long way from peak down to zero, making all these changes to expectations mostly notional, for now — a different set of lines being drawn naively on a whiteboard and waiting to be made real. New emissions peaks are expected both this year and next, which means that more damage is being done to the future climate of the planet right now than at any previous point in history. Things will get worse before they even stabilize.

But we are getting a clearer map of climate change, and however intimidating it looks, that new world must be made navigable — through action to limit the damage and adaptation to defend what can't be stopped. At four degrees, the impacts of warming appeared overwhelming, but at two degrees, the impacts would not be the whole of our human fate, only the landscape on which a new future will be built.

Normalization is a form of adaptation, too, however cruel and unfortunate a form it may appear in theory or ahead of time. Indeed, already we can say a given heat wave was made 30 times more likely by climate change, or that it was a few degrees hotter than it would have been without climate change, and both would be true. We'll be able to talk about the contributions of warming to disasters that buckle whole nations, as the recent monsoon flooding in Pakistan has, or about the human contributions to such vulnerability. And as we do today, we will often reach for the past when trying to judge the present, reckoning with how the world got where it is and who was responsible and whether the result of the fight against warming counts as progress or failure or both. History is our handiest counterfactual, however poor a standard it sets for a world that could have been much better still. "We've come a long way, and we've still got a long way to go," says Hayhoe, the Canadian scientist, comparing the world's progress to a long hike. "We're halfway there. Look at the great view behind you. We actually made it up halfway, and it was a hard slog. So take a breather, pat yourself on the back, but then look up — that's where we have to go. So let's keep on going."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 Seattle fallout shelter: only one built in US
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/about-seattle-nuclear-fallout-shelter-only-one-us/6NWB7RXGUBBI7PORFAL4AEXC3I/
GIST	<p>In November 1962, only a month after the Cuban Missile Crisis, excavation of a shelter in Seattle began.</p> <p>It was expected to be the first of several fallout shelters across the U.S., but ended up being the only one built in the country.</p> <p>The May 15, 1962, Seattle Times identified the structure as "the nation's first fallout shelter to be built into a freeway."</p> <p>Designed by the Seattle engineering firm Anderson Bjornstad Kane and built by McDonald Construction of Seattle for \$67,300, the shelter is located under southbound Interstate 5, at the north end of the Ravenna Bridge.</p> <p>Once construction of the shelter began, contractors were given only 120 days to build it.</p> <p>The shelter was dedicated on March 29, 1963.</p> <p>"It's a pretty minimal shelter, and it's not actually a bomb shelter, it's a fallout shelter," Scott Williams of the Washington State Department of Transportation told KIRO-FM Radio in 2018. "So, it wasn't designed to survive a direct nuclear strike on Seattle."</p> <p>The building is about 3,000 square feet, with an 18-inch-thick concrete roof and 15-inch-thick walls.</p> <p>The main entrance is a sliding, heavy metal grate that leads to an underground concrete hallway to the main part of the facility.</p>

The hallway was designed with many right-angle turns to prevent gamma rays from reaching the interior.

There was a maintenance room with a diesel-powered electric generator, an air circulation system with heat and air conditioning, a well and pipes that connected to the city water and sewer systems.

Other rooms were available to store food or provide simple medical care.

There were two bathrooms with three toilets, a urinal, two sinks and two decontamination showers.

Next to the bathrooms there was a very narrow “escape tunnel” that led out to an area near the street-side entrance.

Walls were painted a pale, institutional green. Freeway noise was audible, but muffled.

Originally designed to hold about 200 people, it was designed with triple-decker bunk beds with single people separated by gender, and families between them.

The communal living area provided about 9.1 square feet per occupant, just smaller than a yoga mat.

There was no kitchen, stove or refrigerator. An operations manual suggested that people would eat canned food, warmed by “placing it in your armpit and holding it there for 10 or 15 minutes.”

Occupants were only allowed to bring items that would “increase shelter habitability,” medicine and “special health foods.”

All food would be turned over to the shelter manager for equitable distribution.

“In general, survival rather than comfort will be the primary objective,” the 1963 shelter guide said.

Animals and pets were not allowed.

Which Green Lake or Ravenna residents were sheltered apparently depended on how fast they could reach the shelter’s door.

When the shelter reached maximum capacity, the shelter was supposed to be locked and anyone left outside was supposed to be directed to the next nearest available shelter; however, there weren’t any.

By the late 1970s, the shelter was used as a district records-storage center for WSDOT.

The emergency escape tunnel was blocked and the communications equipment was removed.

“The only one that was ever built is the one here in Washington state,” Williams said. “By the time it got built, I think people realized it wasn’t really a great idea. Nuclear bombs were getting so big (and) with Soviet submarines, the attacks were going to come really quick,” and shelters wouldn’t be much use.

By 2022, the shelter has been completely sealed up with no further access.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 Report: plastics recycling dead-end street
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/greenpeace-report-finds-plastics-recycling-dead-end-street/story?id=92123958
GIST	A new report by the environmental nonprofit Greenpeace released on Monday finds that the vast majority of plastic waste produced by U.S. households is not recycled.

Lisa Ramsden, a senior plastics campaigner at Greenpeace USA and one of the authors of the report, spoke with host Brad Mielke on ABC News' "Start Here" podcast about the biggest takeaways from the report, the state of the recycling industry in the U.S. at large and what consumers should know about recycling.

START HERE: Can you describe this new report you guys have because it freaked me out. Like, am I not...should I not be...I can't recycle anything? What's going on?

LISA RAMSDEN: So, most plastic is not being recycled in the United States. American households produced about 51 million tons of plastic last year, and only 2.4 million of those tons were actually recycled.

START HERE: As in people are sending them to a recycling center and they're just not getting recycled?

RAMSDEN: Exactly. So there are many difficulties that come along with plastics recycling and people are sending these off to be recycled and then they are sitting in recycling facilities across the country not being recycled or they're being incinerated or sent to landfills instead.

START HERE: This is enraging. Why is that? Because I take a lot of pride in [recycling]. Like I wash out my thing, so it's not dirty, I send them off. So what's, what's the problem?

RAMSDEN: So the problem isn't with recycling. The problem is with plastics. Plastics are a really difficult material to recycle. It's difficult to collect because we have so much plastic in this country and in this world. It's really difficult to sort because there are so many different types of plastic. And even in one plastic bottle you can have a couple of different types of plastic.

It's actually really environmentally harmful to reprocess the plastic. Microplastics are created sometimes, and it can be toxic for the workers who work in these recycling facilities.

And all of these come down to the main point, that is that plastic recycling is just not economical. It's often cheaper for companies to buy new plastic than it is to buy recycled plastic. So there's not a huge market for it.

START HERE: Yeah, I was going to say, what is the corporate responsibility here? Because it seems like you have corporations proudly, and until a few minutes ago I would have said responsibly, are putting on their packaging that this is a recyclable product. This is a No. 1 or No. 2. Do those mean anything, by the way, the No. 1 and No. 2?

RAMSDEN: Well, what No. 1, No. 2 means is what type of plastic it is. So those are different types of plastic and those are the two most recyclable types of plastic. They have a much higher rate of being recycled than plastics 3 through 7.

But corporations actually worked with industry groups to kind of create what plastics recycling is now. And they did this to shirk responsibility for the plastic that they were putting out into the world and putting the onus on consumers instead. You know, if they create a bunch of plastic bottles and put them out into the world, they don't have to worry about it because it's up to the consumer to then take that bottle and put it in a recycling bin.

And so they can kind of wipe their hands clean of all the plastic that they're producing. And so by putting that 'please recycle' symbol on their bottle or whatever type of plastic material, they're hoping that it will get recycled. But as this report points out, these plastics aren't being recycled.

START HERE: So what do we do? Because this makes me want to throw up my hands and just be like, OK, everything goes, I'm going to have a bonfire... What do we do?

RAMSDEN: It's important to keep recycling because again, the problem is not with recycling, it's with plastics and other types [of recycling].

START HERE: Like paper recycling works, you're saying? Metal recycling works?

RAMSDEN: Exactly. Other types of recycling do work. The issue is with plastics. So it's really important to talk to these corporations who are producing so much plastic and get them to change their ways.

We at Greenpeace are calling on corporations to switch to systems of refill and reuse. So we used to be able to get a Coca-Cola in a glass bottle that we would then return to the stores. It would be cleaned out, sanitized, refilled, and then sold again.

START HERE: Like that exact bottle.

RAMSDEN: Yes, exactly. It's not a new concept. It's how the milkman used to get milk to people. And we used to return those bottles and they would be cleaned and refilled. So we're calling on big corporations to switch to these systems, at least to have a portion of their portfolio focused on refill and reuse.

START HERE: That's fascinating. And is there an onus on a consumer then to just consume less plastic? Like when I go to the bodega down the street, should I be using glass instead of plastic?

RAMSDEN: If you are able to use less plastic in your life, that's great. But it's really hard for a lot of people to escape the amount of plastic that these corporations are forcing upon us. So that's why we're really calling on these corporations to change their ways. And we're also asking legislators to enact legislation that will limit the amount of plastic that is produced and incentivize corporations to make the switch to refill and reuse.

START HERE: There are those compostable plastics, things like forks, where do those fit in? And cups, things like that. It makes me wonder, are those really compostable? And is it a good solution? Is that something we want to be getting companies to do to adopt more?

RAMSDEN: Unfortunately, compostable plastics are not a real solution, as you probably expected. A lot of times these compostable plastics aren't actually compostable. They are compostable in industrial grade composting machines. But it's not going to compost in your backyard composting bin.

Also, the reason why we are calling for a switch to refill and reuse is because we don't want to switch from one type of single use or disposable product to another single-use disposable product because that's going to put a strain on another part of the world or our resources and things like that.

So yeah, everyone wants to have an easy switch where we just, you know, why can't we just switch from plastic to paper or why can't we switch from plastics to compostable? But that's going to put a strain somewhere else on our environment. So that's why we're really calling for this real systemic change, switching to systems of refill and reuse and package-free solutions.

START HERE: Thank you so much for the time.

RAMSDEN: Yeah, thanks so much.

[Return to Top](#)

Crime, Criminals

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 Store managers plea for better protections
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3686314/fred-meyer-managers-plea-protection-everett-dangerous/
GIST	<p>David Webster, a manager of a Fred Meyer store in Everett, had one clear message for the city council when they gathered yesterday: "Our store has taken all the safety measures we can and we need help."</p> <p>Fred Meyer associates have had their cars vandalized and stolen, according to Webster, who claimed even one of his associates was abducted while mentioning the dangers the closest bus stop poses for his employees.</p> <p>He wasn't the only Fred Meyer manager who spoke out in front of the city council.</p> <p>"At our store, we have an open-air drug market that is on the corner of Evergreen Way and Casino Road at an abandoned bank," said Tyler Stumpf, a manager of a Fred Meyer located near the Bothell-Everett Highway, at the city council's public forum. "What happens is the drug dealers shows up in their cars, they give the users a list of what they need to come in and steal and they come in and steal."</p>

“They leave drug paraphernalia all over the store, whether its needles, foils with fentanyl, they also use our restrooms as a place to shoot up or do fentanyl,” Stumpf continued. “We just need some help.”

Local law enforcement has spent the past year working with stores involved in the city’s [Retail Theft Program](#), including Fred Meyer, which produced 49 arrests in an undercover theft operation six months ago.

In Washington state alone, shoplifting costs stores more than \$62 million each year, accounting for as much as 40% of a store’s theft loss, according to Shoreline Police Business Watch.

Stumpf stated he called 911 about someone with two knives in the store, but only received a text message as a response saying Everett Police was currently busy.

“We are looking into this call today involving knives, and our police response. We use a program that automatically sends text messages to 911 callers,” Everett Deputy Chief John DeRousse said in an interview with [MyEverettNews](#). “I heard the call getting dispatched today and thought there was an immediate response, but it may have been delayed for some reason unknown to me.”

DeRousse told MyEverettNews that he and his department will continue to work with businesses, citing many of the problems Everett has faced with the homeless, addicted, and mentally ill population is interrelated to the issues the Fred Meyer’s managers expressed publicly.

Earlier this month, Everett Mayor Cassie Franklin joined more than a dozen other mayors in Snohomish County in forming a county-wide public safety coalition to address crime and public safety.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/28 Perpetrator Tadamon massacre still in Syria
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/28/perpetrator-of-syrias-tadamon-massacre-still-working-on-military-base
GIST	<p>The Syrian intelligence officer at the centre of one of the most shocking acts of the civil war – the Tadamon massacre – is still working on a military base outside Damascus and has since been accused by colleagues of directing up to a dozen more mass killings.</p> <p>Amjad Yousef, a major in one of Syria’s most feared intelligence units, is operating from the Kafr Sousa base, where he has been for most of the past six months since the Guardian revealed his role in shooting dead dozens of people across a death pit in Tadamon, a suburb of the Syrian capital in 2013.</p> <p>A former colleague of Yousef’s said he had admitted to the killings in a phone call with a mutual friend. “He said ‘Yes I did it. That is what I had to do at the time.’ No one was shocked we knew him. And we know the regime,” the former colleague told the Guardian.</p> <p>The images shocked the Syrian diaspora and drew condemnation across Europe and in Washington. France, Germany and the Netherlands have all opened war crimes investigations using laws of universal jurisdiction and are hunting any perpetrators who may have escaped to European soil.</p> <p>German investigators believe they may have identified an associate of Yousef’s now living in Germany and are preparing a case against the former intelligence officer. The Tadamon revelations also caused uproar in Syria, rattling the country’s leadership, which usually keeps a vice-like grip on state secrets, and causing widespread anger even among supporters of the president, Bashar al-Assad.</p> <p>After the revelations, close to 100 long-term prisoners were released from government dungeons. Some had been locked up for more than a decade.</p>

The former colleague of Yousef's told the Guardian that the major had been a feared presence in Tadamon for the past decade, and had regularly snatched women from the streets of the suburb, many of whom were never seen again. "I saw him take women from a bread queue one morning. They were innocent. They had done nothing. They were either raped, or killed. Nothing less."

Yousef was identified through research conducted by Prof Uğur Üngör and the researcher Annsar Shahoud from the University of Amsterdam's Institute of Holocaust and Genocide Studies. The academics were leaked 27 videos, which were downloaded from the laptop used by Branch 227 of the Syrian intelligence, – of which Yousef was deputy leader. The sources who leaked the videos fled Syria earlier this year and their identities are being sought by the country's military intelligence, which has opened an inquiry into how the material was leaked.

In an unpublished video, seen by the Guardian, Yousef shoots up to six women across a pit as his death quad looks on, and sometimes joins the slaughter. The pit is then set alight and a bulldozer brings ash and debris to fill it in, in what appears to be an attempt to eliminate evidence of the war crime.

The former colleague said up to a dozen more massacres were carried out in Tadamon and that local people were well aware of the locations. "All of the people were Sunnis," he said. "This was sectarian cleansing. Nothing else. It was Alawites eliminating Sunnis."

A sectarian dimension to the killings had been suspected, but two more of Yousef's former colleagues had suggested they were also intended as a warning to communities in or near Tadamon not to collaborate with opposition groups.

The source said all massacre sites in Tadamon were no-go zones for local residents and that the final death toll of killings by Branch 227 could be as high as 350.

The videos marked one of the only examples in the Syrian war where senior regime officials were shown committing atrocities. The unit recorded the videos to demonstrate to senior leaders – and even Syria's political regime – what had taken place.

Assad reacted angrily when France announced in August that it would open a war crimes inquiry, telling Paris it was using the allegations as a pretext to try to re-colonise Syria.

France said its counterterrorism prosecutor's office had been handed the videos. "The alleged actions are likely to constitute the most serious international crimes, specifically crimes against humanity and war crimes. The fight against impunity is a matter of justice for the victims. It is also an essential prerequisite for building a lasting peace in Syria. After a decade of crimes against the Syrian people, France remains committed to ensuring that those responsible are brought to justice," a government spokesperson said.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 Overt antisemitism returns; violence rises
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation-politics/overt-u-s-antisemitism-returns-with-trump-ye-something-is-different/
GIST	<p>Longtime watchdogs of antisemitism say there is nothing new about the kinds of derogatory comments about Jews that the rapper Ye, formerly known as Kanye West, former President Donald Trump, sundry far-right political candidates and others have made in recent weeks.</p> <p>But what has struck some experts is how blatant the comments about Jews are at a time when incidents of harassment, vandalism and violence against them have been at their highest levels since at least the 1970s. Recent data already showed that a majority of American Jews fear violence against them.</p> <p>"Empirically, something is different. The level of public animosity towards Jews is higher than it's been in recent memory," Jonathan Greenblatt, CEO of the Anti-Defamation League, said in an interview.</p>

Experts said the climate is the product of a stew of forces including a digital culture that spreads misinformation and hate and right-wing political forces focused on protecting White Christians' status. Some said current antisemitism is also aggravated by more people downplaying it as merely an interreligious issue instead of a dangerous form of racism; in the past majorities from Germany to America made clear they saw Jews as a distinct and inferior race.

To survivors of even the deadliest attack on Jews in U.S. history — the 2018 massacre at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh — the most urgent worry is that the event, which left 11 dead and at least six wounded, is already fading from public consciousness, crowded out by the dozens of mass shootings that followed.

Barton Schachter, a Tree of Life member and a former president of the synagogue, said: "This is what scares me, that in time [the shooting is] just another thing. I'm afraid this will drift into that direction. I don't know how to save it."

He called West, who now goes by Ye, "an idiot ... but eventually he'll be gone. Another person will take his place. The question is: How do we continue keeping the good stuff alive? That's the hard part. The memory of these 11 [who were killed at Tree of Life] and the 6 million [Jews who died in the Holocaust], that's the hard part."

Some experts say the increasingly unconcealed antisemitism brings 2022 into line with most of Jewish history.

"To me, it's like we're coming back from a 50-year vacation," said Mark Oppenheimer, co-host of the Jewish podcast "Unorthodox" and author of the 2021 book "Squirrel Hill: The Tree of Life Shooting and the Soul of a Neighborhood." "We're back to 'Keep your head down; no one has your back.' It's not that we're back to real estate bans; it's more the old 'It's a little unseemly to be Jewish.'"

But current attitudes toward Jews are complex and can seem to run in different directions, say antisemitism watchers. Americans overall espouse less antisemitic views than they did 60 years ago. An ADL index in which people are asked if they agree with a series of negative stereotypes about Jews has measured antisemitism since the 1960s, when 29 percent of Americans were considered antisemitic. In 2019, ADL's most recent year of measurement, the number was its lowest ever in the United States, 11 percent.

That same year, however, the ADL also tracked 2,107 incidents of vandalism, violence and harassment toward Jews in the United States, which at the time was the highest number since the group began gathering data in the 1970s. (That record was broken in 2021.)

"While at a generalized level, antisemitic attitudes have dropped, the incidents have risen because there is less shame. People feel they can say and do anything," Greenblatt said.

Benjamin Lorber, a longtime researcher of antisemitism with Political Research Associates, said the latest rush of antisemitic rhetoric "fits into that broader political project," and he is not surprised to see it in the lead-up to the midterms this year. "The right is trying to regain power it felt it lost in 2020, so it makes sense, in addition to virulent anti-LGBTQ bigotry, that antisemitism is in the mix again," he said.

He and other experts noted that the 2018 Tree of Life massacre came just before the 2018 midterm elections and that the suspect had posted on the far-right social media site Gab that he was angry about "filthy" Jews who work to resettle refugees, especially Muslims.

"We're in an era when the MAGA movement's boundaries of who is considered a real, good, authentic American are mutating and the future is very unpredictable," Lorber said.

Trump earlier this month attacked American Jews in a post on his Truth Social platform, saying Jews in the United States must "get their act together" and show more appreciation for the state of Israel "before it

is too late.” Trump has multiple times raised the old antisemitic trope that U.S. Jews hold, or should hold, a secret or dual loyalty to Israel rather than the United States. He said evangelicals are “far more appreciative” of actions on Israel than Jews.

Most Republicans said nothing about Trump’s Truth Social post. Trump also defended Ye in an Oct. 18 interview with Salem News Channel, and other conservatives also rallied to support Ye, most commonly by portraying him as a victim of supposed efforts by Democrats, in combination with the media and corporations, to suppress opposing viewpoints.

Fox News host Tucker Carlson, in clips released by Vice News, didn’t challenge Ye during an interview when the performer repeated a belief held by some that today’s Jews aren’t the legitimate Jews of the Bible. This is part of the doctrine held by the movement known as the Black Hebrew Israelites: that African Americans are the true descendants of ancient Israelites, a belief that is often blended with accusations that mainstream Jews aren’t the legitimate Jews.

“When I say Jew, I mean ... the people known as the race Black,” Ye told Carlson.

In the interview, Ye also said there is some “financial engineering” to being Jewish.

Antisemitism has also become a prominent issue in the Pennsylvania governor’s race between Republican Doug Mastriano, who promotes Christian nationalism, and Democrat Josh Shapiro, who is Jewish. Mastriano’s campaign has advertised on Gab. In a September campaign speech, Mastriano attacked Shapiro’s attendance of a private Jewish day school in Bryn Mawr, in remarks that were criticized as coded antisemitism. An adviser to Mastriano, former Trump lawyer Jenna Ellis, responded to the backlash by dismissing Shapiro as “at best a secular Jew.”

Lorber said that, in a period of rampant misinformation, economic insecurity and alienation, such comments fit into the narrative of a segment of Americans looking to identify internal enemies, groups they perceive to be not sufficiently American or, in the case of Jews, part of some invisible power structure keeping them from success or censoring them. When Adidas ended its partnership with Ye on Tuesday over his antisemitic remarks, some conservatives were quick to cast him as a victim of “woke capitalism.”

“They’re like: ‘Maybe Kanye is on to something,’ ” Lorber said.

Adidas acted in response to a public pressure campaign, and some observers said it was evidence that efforts to push back harder against antisemitism are working.

David Baddiel, a British comic and screenwriter, last year published a book called “Jews Don’t Count” about the ramifications of antisemitism not being seen as a form of racism equally dangerous to others.

“Since I wrote the book, I hear more and more people speaking out about antisemitism (even as I see it growing),” Baddiel wrote to The Washington Post. “I used to think the concept of allyship, very important to progressives, would never apply to us ... but I think that’s changing.”

Greenblatt, in a statement, praised Adidas’s move as a “very positive” one that “creates consequences,” because brands today “mediate so much of our lives.” Other brands, including Balenciaga and Gap, also cut business ties with Ye.

Deborah Lipstadt, the U.S. State Department’s envoy on antisemitism, in a statement Wednesday emphasized the role of corporate accountability. She said that “social media and online spaces have been dominated by dangerous, inflammatory antisemitic rhetoric in recent weeks.”

“I commend the stand that various private companies and platforms have taken against antisemitism, ensuring their platforms are not used to spread hate, and cutting ties and ending lucrative business

	<p>relationships with partners who engage in it. Corporations should continue to act responsibly and make it clear that touting hate is not profitable.”</p> <p>But Oppenheimer said people shouldn’t leave it to corporate America to police prejudice.</p> <p>“It’s nice when corporate leaders have a conscience,” he said, “but anyone who relies on the dictates of profit margins to enforce sane and moral norms is in trouble.”</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/27 Parents, kids steal \$15K makeup products
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/police-marysville-parents-bring-two-children-to-steal-15k-of-product-from-ultra-makeup#
GIST	<p>MARYSVILLE, Wash. — Marysville police said a couple was arrested after they reportedly stole more than \$15,000 worth of products from a Marysville Ulta store.</p> <p>According to police the couple, along with their two young children, entered the Ulta in Marysville and took about 400 cosmetic products valued at \$15,500. The employees called the Lynnwood store to warn them of the family and about 90 minutes later, police said the family showed up at the Lynnwood location.</p> <p>The employees told the family to leave and called police who quickly located the suspects and took them into custody. Ulta loss prevention told police that the couple is responsible for approximately \$22,000 in theft between nine Ulta stores in multiple states.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/27 DUI enforcement over Halloween weekend
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/police-ramping-up-dui-enforcement-for-halloween-weekend-puget-sound-bellevue-seattle-washington-state-patrol-troopers-king-county-kent-burien#
GIST	<p>To keep the horrors off the streets this Halloween weekend, several police agencies in the Puget Sound Region are ramping up their patrols in an effort to bust impaired drivers.</p> <p>The Bellevue Police Department is just one of the agencies increasing patrols in King, Pierce and Snohomish counties this weekend. Captain Landon Barnwell of Bellevue said all officers will be looking out for possible signs.</p> <p>“We’re bringing in extra officers to go around,” Barnwell said. “They’ll be visible looking for those signs of impaired drivers.</p> <p>“The signs include excessive speeds, poor lane travel, running a red light, any kind of those moving type violations.”</p> <p>He said it has already been a deadly year on Washington state roads due to the high number of people driving with drugs or alcohol in their system.</p> <p>“In 2021, approximately 25% of fatal crashes involved impaired drivers,” Barnwell said. “We’re on track to meet or exceed these numbers this year. So that’s the biggest thing — loss of life.”</p> <p>His advice to all drivers is to make smart choices. If you have time to plan your Halloween festivities, you have time to plan a rideshare or find a designated driver.</p> <p>“We’re in the day and age where not getting a ride should not be a reason to get behind the wheel,” he said.</p> <p>According to the King County Target Zero Task Force, Kirkland, Redmond, Kent, Burien, SeaTac and Washington State Patrol will all be increasing DUI patrols from Friday through Monday.</p>

	Barnwell said the timeframes for the patrols vary, but it's most likely the extra patrols will be out starting in the early evening hours through mid-morning each day.
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/27 USPS data: change-of-address fraud on rise
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/jesse-jones/change-address-fraud-rise/N5SA3MH46BBRTHBH72F2WPOQ7U/
GIST	<p>Change-of-address fraud is on the rise, almost tripling to 23,000 cases last year, according to new data from the United States Postal Service.</p> <p>Scammers changing an address either online or in person have been a nightmare, one family told Jesse Jones.</p> <p>Travis Palmer of Tacoma has an extremely rare metabolic disorder called Barth syndrome, which affects his heart, muscles and growth.</p> <p>A scammer changed Travis' address, directing vital equipment for Travis more than a thousand miles away to the scammer's home in Nevada.</p> <p>"It's been a nightmare," Travis' mother Carra said.</p> <p>John Wiegand from the United States Postal Inspection Service says out of 36 million changes of address made annually in the U.S., only 36,000 come back with some sort of issue.</p> <p>But the Palmers said they have faced an issue twice.</p> <p>"When it happens twice to somebody, (it) happens multiple times," Wiegand said. "That's an indicator to us that something a little more (is) going on here."</p> <p>For more than a decade, the USPS Office of Inspector General has filed reports on issues in the postal services change-of-address process.</p> <p>In 2008, the OIG reported that the Postal Service should improve controls to ensure proper authorization and validation of COA requests.</p> <p>But in 2018, a report said the USPS "lacks a control requiring customers to present a government-issued form of identification for review when submitting a hardcopy COA."</p> <p>And in April 2022, new data revealed fraudulent changes of address almost tripled from 8857 in 2020 to more than 23,000 in 2021.</p> <p>Carra Palmer would like to tell the Postal Service it should work for the customer and not just allow anyone to change a name and address, or forward mail somewhere.</p> <p>A change of address can be made at the post office or online. An in-person application requires an ID to confirm, while an online application just needs a credit card.</p> <p>One issue is if a scammer gets a credit card in your name, they can change your address easily.</p> <p>Jesse Jones went to Nevada, to stake out the mailbox where the Palmers' mail was redirected.</p> <p>A neighbor told Jesse the people who lived there were squatters who left in a U-Haul in the middle of the night.</p> <p>Brian McDermott of Mountlake Terrace also has had a false change of address filed at his residence and his mail was sent to California.</p>

"It's stressful because there's nothing you can do to correct it," McDermott said. "Absolutely nothing. You can go up there, you make all the requests you want, but you got to go through the process."

Wiegand told Jesse they will investigate the Palmers' case.

In a statement to KIRO 7 News, the USPS said: "Identity theft can't happen through a change of address fraud. Someone can't steal your identity with a change of address order. In order for someone to submit a forward on your behalf, they've already obtained your personal identifiable information and stolen your identity."

But that doesn't account for someone not asking for ID at the counter.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 Half WA unsolved murder cases in King Co.
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/crime/unsolved/murder-cases-washington-unsolved/281-0dca3c44-baec-4704-9089-5ffc822f5dfc
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON, USA — There are thousands of murder and missing persons cases that are still unsolved in Washington state.</p> <p>Of the homicide cases in Washington from 1965 to 2019, 28% are currently unsolved. That is nearly 3,000 cases. Almost half of them are in King County.</p> <p>This is a portion of the staggering number of unsolved cases in the United States. According to Project Cold Case, there are currently approximately 270,000 unsolved homicides.</p> <p>"It's just a scary thought when you think of all those people out there that have not been held accountable for their actions," said Project Cold Case Founder Ryan Backmann.</p> <p>There has also been a decline in the U.S. homicide clearance rate, according to Murder Accountability Project. That means the frequency of solving cold cases is trending downwards.</p> <p>In 1965, the homicide clearance rate was 91%. In 2020, the rate was only 54%.</p> <p>Backmann said there are many reasons the country is seeing the decline. He cited an increase in random acts of violence and a more transient society.</p> <p>"[In the 60s], they were known relationships, victim and offender relationships. It was domestic violence, it was drunk neighbors, you know, it was feuds, but there was typically a known relationship between the offender and the suspect," Backmann said. "And nowadays, there's a lot more random acts, a lot more kind of code of silence, not coming forward when you have information or maybe taking justice in your own hands."</p> <p>Beckmann knows what it feels like to search for answers. His father was murdered in 2009 and his case is still unsolved.</p> <p>"Next month will be 13 years since he was murdered. It's been looked at a couple of times and evidence has been tested and retested," he said.</p> <p>However, with no leads, the case remains inactive.</p> <p>What is a cold case?</p> <p>A cold case involves a homicide or suspected homicide that no one has been charged and convicted for. However, a case may not qualify as "unsolved" if there is evidence of guilt of the suspect, but they died before a trial. Another reason a case wouldn't qualify is if there was compelling evidence of guilt, but</p>

	<p>the original suspect was tried and acquitted or could not be prosecuted for technical reasons, according to the Department of Justice.</p> <p>The Unsolved Northwest team will go through KING 5 archives and talk to victims' families and investigators to try to uncover the truth.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/27 Climate protester glues head to painting
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/27/arts/pearl-earring-vermeer-climate-activists.html
GIST	<p>A climate protester glued his head to “Girl With a Pearl Earring,” the famous painting by Johannes Vermeer that was on exhibit at a museum in The Hague on Thursday, the latest in a series of actions by activists that have targeted world-renowned paintings in recent months as the protesters have sought to draw attention to climate change.</p> <p>The stunts have recently included hurling mashed potatoes at a painting by Claude Monet and splattering soup on a painting by Vincent van Gogh.</p> <p>Vermeer’s much-celebrated painting from 1665 is part of the collection at the Mauritshuis, a small museum exhibiting Dutch and Flemish paintings from the 17th century.</p> <p>The one-minute video clip of the action shows a man coming close to the painting and gluing his head to it. At the same time, another man adheres his hand to the wall next to the artwork and pours a red substance on the first man’s head and body.</p> <p>The protester who glued his hand to the wall addresses onlookers who have gathered around. People can be heard gasping, expressing their outrage and calling the pair “obscene.”</p> <p>“How do you feel when you see something beautiful and priceless being apparently destroyed before your eyes?” the protester said. “Do you feel outraged? Good. Where is that feeling when you see the planet being destroyed before your very eyes?”</p> <p>He then assures other patrons that the painting is protected by glass, a statement which seemingly does little to blunt their anger. Several people can be heard telling him to “shut up.”</p> <p>René Timmermans, a spokesman for the Mauritshuis museum, confirmed that the incident occurred around 2 p.m. local time. He said that the artwork, under a layer of glass, was not damaged and that it would be back on view “as soon as possible.”</p> <p>“Art is defenseless, and the Mauritshuis firmly rejects attempts to damage it for any purpose whatsoever,” Mr. Timmermans said.</p> <p>The Dutch police said on Twitter that it had made three arrests in connection to the incident.</p> <p>Intrigue over the painting, depicting a luminous young woman wearing a vibrantly colored turban and an oversized, gleaming pearl earring, has grown over the decades, possibly amplified by popular depictions in a novel that explored the identity of Vermeer’s muse. The book, which shares its name with the painting and was written by Tracy Chevalier, was later adapted into a movie starring Scarlett Johansson.</p> <p>Ms. Chevalier said in a statement that while she empathized with the frustration of the climate activists, she hoped they would choose targets “more obviously connected with their just cause than my favorite painting.”</p> <p>“For me, seeing that painting vandalized is like watching a daughter being attacked. I’m very relieved she’s protected by glass,” she said.</p>

There have been at least three reported actions by climate activists targeting artworks this month, which took place in London, Germany and now in the Netherlands.

The protesters who targeted “Girl With a Pearl Earring” on Thursday were wearing shirts printed with the logo of [Just Stop Oil](#), a group opposing oil and gas projects in Britain.

Lucy Graves, a spokeswoman for the group, said in a statement that it had not organized this action.

“We applaud those ordinary everyday people who refuse to stand by, who step up to act,” she said. “Ending new oil and gas, our demand is supported across the world.”

“If we don’t stop the harm caused by burning fossil fuels there will be no one to look at the masterpieces,” she said.

On Oct. 14, two of the group’s members were behind the [flinging of Heinz cream of tomato soup](#) at “[Sunflowers](#)” by Vincent van Gogh, one of the most beloved paintings at the National Gallery in London.

Activists with Just Stop Oil glued their hands to the wall as part of the protest in which soup was thrown at a Vincent van Gogh painting at the National Gallery in London. Credit...Just Stop Oil/AFP Via Getty Images

The two young activists who tossed the soup spoke at an online meeting hosted by Just Stop Oil on Thursday. They said that the action had been empowering, even as they were fueled by fear and anger about the climate crisis and the instability it poses for their futures.

Anna Holland, a 20-year-old university student, called it the most “cathartic and therapeutic moment of my life,” and an act that was “on the right side of history.”

The other participant in the protest is concerned that they could face time in jail.

“I’m not a criminal; I’m a scared kid trying to fight for their future,” Phoebe Plummer said. “Where’s that emotional response when it’s our planet and people that are being destroyed? Where’s that shock when we are set to lose our real sunflowers?”

On Sunday, two activists with the group Last Generation glued their hands to the wall after [throwing mashed potatoes](#) on “[Grainstacks](#)” by Claude Monet at the Museum Barberini in Potsdam, Germany.

And earlier this year, in Paris, a lone activist adopted an elaborate ruse, disguising himself as woman in a wheelchair and [smearing a pastry on the Mona Lisa](#) at the Louvre Museum.

Ultimately, no lasting damage has been done to the artworks. They were all behind glass.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 Dragged officer into Jan 6 mob: gets 90mo.
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/27/us/politics/jan-6-sentencing.html
GIST	<p>A Tennessee man was sentenced Thursday to 7 1/2 years in prison for dragging a police officer protecting the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, into an angry pro-Trump crowd that brutally assaulted the officer.</p> <p>The man, Albuquerque Cospirator Head, pleaded guilty in March to assaulting the officer, Michael Fanone, who has emerged as an outspoken advocate for the officers who were subjected to the mob violence on Jan. 6. The sentence was one of the most severe penalties handed down so far in the Justice Department’s investigation of the Capitol attack.</p> <p>As part of his plea, Head, a 43-year-old construction worker, admitted that during the violence outside the Capitol, he grabbed Fanone around the neck and told the crowd around him, “I got one!” Head then</p>

forcibly hauled Fanone down the Capitol steps and into the mob, where he was beaten, kicked and attacked with a stun gun.

Some in the crowd tried to strip Fanone of his service weapon as one rioter threatened to kill him with his own gun.

Appearing as a witness at a sentencing hearing in U.S. District Court in Washington, Fanone, who has since left the police force, told Judge Amy Berman Jackson that he wanted Head to face the maximum penalty for the assault. He added that he wanted Jackson to show Head the same amount of mercy that Head had shown him on Jan. 6, saying that was “none.”

The 90-month sentence Jackson handed down was slightly less than the 96 months that prosecutors had requested. In court papers, prosecutors called Head’s attack on Fanone “some of the most barbaric violence on Jan. 6.”

Apparently agreeing, Jackson excoriated Head from the bench, calling the assault “horrific” and telling the defendant that his case was one of the most serious Jan. 6 criminal matters that she had handled.

Jackson told Head that he had treated Fanone as his “prey” and as a “trophy” by bragging aloud as he grabbed the officer around his neck and essentially displayed him to the crowd.

“He was protecting the very essence of democracy, the peaceful transfer of power after a democratic election,” Jackson said of Fanone. “He was protecting America.”

As she has done before at sentencing hearings, Jackson warned that lies about the 2020 election continue to be spread across the country and that even now some supporters of former President Donald Trump have turned their anger toward the officers who were protecting the Capitol on Jan. 6, not the rioters who stormed it.

“The dark shadow of tyranny unfortunately has not gone away,” she said. “Some people are directing their vitriol at Officer Fanone and not at the people who summoned the mob in the first place.”

Last month, one of Head’s co-defendants, Kyle Young, was sentenced to 86 months in prison for taking part in the assault on Fanone. Young had admitted to using a strobe light to disorient police and then to grabbing Fanone’s wrist, restraining him as he was set upon by the mob.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 Germany: rising levels of antisemitism
SOURCE	https://www.algemeiner.com/2022/10/26/five-antisemitic-incidents-reported-daily-in-germany-as-high-levels-of-jew-hatred-refuse-to-abate/
GIST	<p>The German authorities disclosed on Tuesday that an average of five antisemitic outrages have been reported every day during 2022, continuing the trend of rising levels of Jew-hatred registered in previous years.</p> <p>Data gathered by the Federal Criminal Police Office showed a total of 1,555 reported antisemitic incidents this year. The data was provided in response to a formal request from a group of German parliamentarians.</p> <p>A total of 55 crimes against Jews were classified as “violent,” with the remaining offenses including incitement to hatred and displaying the symbols of proscribed far right and neo-Nazi organizations.</p> <p>According to the data, a total of 936 suspects have been identified, but not a single arrest warrant has been issued.</p>

The Federal Criminal Police Office pointed out that the numbers released on Wednesday were provisional and could be subject to revision. According to the *Welt* news outlet, the calculations for the first quarter of this year have already been corrected upwards, with 683 antisemitic crimes recorded and not the original figure of 459.

The revisions led some German politicians to express frustration with the data-gathering process. “In view of the general increase in antisemitism, I would wish for the correct recording to be carried out more quickly,” Petra Pau, the vice-president of the Bundestag, Germany’s parliament, told *Welt*. “Only then can politicians and the authorities recognize threatening developments in a timely manner.”

The Central Council of German Jews said in a statement that it was disturbed, if not surprised, by the data.

“In times of crisis, Jews often have to serve as scapegoats,” the council’s president, Josef Schuster, told *Welt*. He added that while in his view far right extremism posed the greatest threat to German Jews, “when it comes to hostilities that are not included in the statistics, I often hear that people with a Muslim background are also involved.”

Schuster also observed that there had been “a paradigm shift in art and science” which meant that antisemitic tropes were more common. For much of this year, the German art world was embroiled in the successive scandals involving antisemitism at the Documenta art festival in the city of Kassel, where classic antisemitic and viscerally anti-Zionist imagery was on display in several works. Such episodes helped to legitimize antisemitic violence in Germany, Schuster said.

A total of 3,028 antisemitic incidents were recorded in 2021 by Germany’s Federal Ministry of the Interior — a 30 percent increase on the previous year. Nearly half of the incidents occurred in the second quarter of last year, during the conflict between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip that witnessed antisemitic violence accompanying “Free Palestine” demonstrations around the world.

Last April, the head of Germany’s domestic intelligence service warned that the antisemitic outrages that are actually reported to the authorities were merely the “tip of the iceberg.”

Thomas Haldenwang, the president of Germany’s federal office for the protection of the constitution (BfV), additionally noted that it was “frightening that antisemitic narratives are sometimes embraced by people in the middle of German society, serving as a link between social discourse and extremist ideologies.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 Trafficked guns used in school shooting?
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/philadelphia-deputy-accused-trafficking-guns-deadly-school-shooting/story?id=92227620
GIST	<p>A former Philadelphia sheriff’s deputy allegedly illegally sold two firearms that were used in a deadly school shooting, according to federal prosecutors.</p> <p>Samir Ahmad, 29, of Philadelphia, has been charged with firearms trafficking and selling firearms to a person unlawfully in the U.S., the Department of Justice announced Thursday.</p> <p>Ahmad allegedly sold a confidential FBI informant who was unlawfully in the U.S. several firearms while he was employed as a deputy sheriff with the Philadelphia Sheriff’s Office, according to a criminal complaint unsealed Thursday.</p> <p>One of the sales, for a revolver, occurred on April 27, according to the complaint. Prosecutors further alleged that he sold the informant two semi-automatic pistols for \$3,000 on Oct. 13.</p>

Law enforcement traced the two pistols to a [recent shooting](#) outside Roxborough High School in Philadelphia, according to federal prosecutors. Five high schoolers were shot, one fatally, after at least four people opened fire outside the school on Sept. 27, the DOJ said.

"Just two weeks later, the defendant obtained two of the guns used in that shooting then sold them to the informant," prosecutors said in a motion for pretrial detention filed on Wednesday. "The fact that the defendant had access to these guns so quickly after they were used to commit such a horrific crime speaks volumes about the danger that this defendant poses to the community."

The motion further alleges that Ahmad sold the informant another semi-automatic pistol, as well as more than 50 grams of methamphetamine, on Oct. 18.

Ahmad, who had been employed as a deputy with the sheriff's office since February 2018, was fired and arrested on Oct. 19, the DOJ said. He faces a maximum sentence of 15 years in prison for the firearms trafficking charges and could face additional charges for the alleged drug and firearm sales on Oct. 18, according to the DOJ.

It is unclear if Ahmad has an attorney. Online court records do not list any attorney information.

"As alleged, Samir Ahmad abused his authority -- to the greatest extent possible -- as a sworn law enforcement officer," U.S. Attorney Jacqueline Romero said in a statement, charging that the former deputy was "adding fuel to the already incendiary fire of deadly gun violence in the city of Philadelphia."

The Philadelphia Sheriff's Office [said in a statement](#) that Ahmad was dismissed "for repeated violations" of the office's "directives, policies and procedures."

"As always, the Office of the Sheriff will continue to cooperate with local, state and federal authorities," the statement said.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 Murder probe: 8 found dead in house fire
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/dead-oklahoma-house-fire-police/story?id=92240575
GIST	<p>A homicide investigation is underway after eight people were found dead in a house fire in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, police said Thursday.</p> <p>The fire took place on the 400 block of South Hickory Avenue, police said. A family of eight, including six children, lived in the house, as confirmed by witnesses, the Broken Arrow Police Department said during a press conference.</p> <p>Police were unable to confirm who the victims are as of Thursday night, including whether or not the family members who lived in the house are among the eight people deceased, but said there's no threat to the community.</p> <p>Authorities said it was a large fire with "a lot of moving parts."</p> <p>"BAPD continues to investigate the circumstances surrounding the incident. It is a complex scene given the state of the house due to the fire damage," the police department wrote on Twitter.</p> <p>A press conference was scheduled for Friday morning with the police and fire chiefs.</p> <p>Broken Arrow is a suburb of Tulsa and is located about 125 miles northeast of Oklahoma City.</p>
Return to Top	

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